

PLANTED IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD:
DEVELOPING DYNAMIC CORPORATE WORSHIP WITH CHURCH OF THE
BRETHREN AGING CHRISTIANS OF CONTINUING CARE RETIREMENT
COMMUNITIES

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To Heather, my wife and best friend

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is toward the development of dynamic corporate worship with Continuing Care Retirement Community elder members of the Church of the Brethren. The theological framework as well as the theoretical and practical literature review will inform the project design for this thesis. Subsequently, a series of questions will be constructed in order to guide elder input, by questionnaire and focus group discussion, informing ministry leaders toward development of purposeful corporate worship with elders in transition from sanctuary to chapel. These responses will guide ministry leaders on how the corporate worship dynamic affirms belonging to God and becoming like Jesus with elder members of the Church of the Brethren.

I. THE PROBLEM AND SETTING

Expressing Christian Faith Together

Active, growing Christians affirm, confess, and express faith everyday by thoughtful inward contemplation and outward expression. Expressed faith, springing from one's relationship with God, can be any means by which one spiritually responds to God. Everything from prayer to singing, and Scripture reading to acts of service can broadly qualify as expressions of Christian spirituality or worship. These expressions, whether by corporate ritual or personal contemplation, promote and cultivate spiritual enrichment and growth in maturing Christians in the context of community.

As persons called to build up the saints, *ministry leaders*¹ aim at equipping Christians with the means to become fully like Jesus Christ in the context of community (Ephesians 4:11-13)². While many present Christian ministry approaches *with, to, and for* aging Christians tend to be reactive rather than proactive, it is imperative that vital communities of faith, whether congregationally or *fellowship based*³, prepare to equip *elders*⁴ with the means to express, maintain, and enhance faith through corporate worship. The impetus for this project is found in a Christian pastor's heart set upon the fulfillment of

¹ The term *ministry leaders* is used throughout to refer to primary pastoral caregivers, regardless of whether serving in a congregational or fellowship-based setting.

² Kenneth Barker, general editor, *The NIV Study Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985). This text will serve as the standard for all scriptural references used, unless otherwise noted.

³ A *fellowship based*, or institutional type setting, in this case refers to a worshipping community in a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC).

⁴ The term *elder*, while scripturally associated with position in the New Testament Church, will be used throughout this text to refer to persons, male and female, who are senior adults.

God's reign established, maintained, and enhanced in the hearts of fruitful aging Christians, in the context of community. Fruitfulness, later in life, has less to do with outward deeds of faith than cultivating the fruit of the Spirit within: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

-Galatians 5:22-23a

Chaplains and pastors relating to *Continuing Care Retirement*

*Communities*⁵ (CCRC) discover, in a continuum setting, numerous ministry opportunities which cultivate care for aging Christians, that may promote spiritual growth through dynamic components of corporate worship in either congregational or fellowship based settings. The setting of CCRCs holds great potential for broadening the scope of proactive or "purposeful"⁶ integrative ministry possibilities with aging Christians involving more than one to one visitation. In a broad continuum setting, where early active elders through late passive elders live, a microcosm exists through which ministry or laity leaders can begin to observe and reflect on older adult ministry approaches. The challenge exists for CCRC ministry leaders to articulate components of purposeful ministry to and with senior adults for congregational ministry leaders.

The Church of the Brethren has valued the role of CCRC ministry leaders as resource persons to purposeful ministry development as evidenced in many

⁵ *Continuing Care Retirement Communities* is the name given to long-term care communities which offer older adults a continuum of living settings from residential or independent living through health care.

⁶ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, *Statement on Aging* (Elgin, IL: Church of the Brethren General Board, 1985), 3. The 1985 *Statement on Aging* speaks of "Goals for ministry with the aging" as "purposeful action."

Annual Conference statements related to aging.⁷ While the Church of the Brethren Annual Conferences' foundational work, titled *Statement on Aging* (1985) is dated, CCRC ministry leaders remain a key to providing up-to-date resources and information on developing proactive elder ministry in congregational settings. The 21st century brings with it the promise of ministry leaders, in congregational and fellowship settings, learning from one another about spirituality and healthy congregational life. One can find, in developing age-integrated congregational worship, there may be possibilities of regaining a rich quality of community which includes Christians of all ages. A vision of this comes into focus by incorporating theological, theoretical, and practical ministry approaches focused upon ministry that includes elder Brethren in worship with all Christians.

With ever-increasing numbers of older adults in local congregations come potential opportunities for ministry leaders and congregations. At the same time, ministry leaders find it difficult to find a guide by which to exercise substantive ministry to older adults. Some ministry leaders may be aware of the needs of elder members, but lack the resources to effectively develop intentional ministry with elders regardless of whether they are members or attenders. Other ministry leaders may be completely unaware of the worship and spiritual life needs of elders and how to develop worship which incorporates the elements of traditional worship. In either case, ministry leaders tend to be more reactive in dynamic, inward and outward, worship preparation rather than

⁷ The Church of the Brethren Annual Conference *Statement on Aging* (1985) speaks of long-term care facilities being resources for senior adult ministries.

proactive.

Granted, congregations have provided programming for senior adults for many years. Church calendars have included socials, support groups, and trips initiated by seniors, which serve to meet social and emotional needs of the retired and or widowed. In recent years, congregational leaders have recognized shifting trends in this growing population, yet reactively equipped for the tasks of senior adult ministry. Consequently, some purposeful ministry with active senior adults, in some congregations, has placed its affect outside of the realm of overseeing ministry leadership, namely pastors. Giving the responsibility to someone other than the pastor or ministry team, who has general interest in senior adults, can result in cumbersome, reactionary programming potentially resulting to such ends as segregating seniors from an age-integrated faith community life. This is not to be critical of well-intentioned volunteers, but to call ministry leaders to account for promoting healthy community life. The result has the potential to be a toxic catalyst of congregational segregation.

To one extent, stylizing worship as contemporary and traditional serves as an example of how some ministry leaders have chosen to segregate members to proactively plan worship with an appeal to younger Christians and reactively plan worship for elders which may be satisfied by traditional or blended styles of worship. What does this choice assume? It assumes that congregational life can only be experienced by those who are the same age or have the same musical taste. Interestingly while Church of the Brethren elders, who are of a Free Church worship tradition, attend and even prefer traditional worship to

contemporary styles, their preference is not exclusive to traditional settings.⁸

More will be said later about these observations (2006) by Church of the Brethren sociologist Carl D. Bowman.

From the perspective of a congregational ministry leader of an earlier generation Glen Weimer, a Church of the Brethren pastor, writes, "The life of the church is no richer, deeper, or better than her worship. In fact, the character of her worship is an index of her life, and her life a demonstration of her worship. Men may live better than their worship, but not for long."⁹ Ministry leaders concede that a genuine experience of fellowship in corporate worship enriches the spiritual life of participants, regardless of spiritual maturity or age. There is great wisdom in Weimer's naming worship as a measure of a congregation's spiritual health.

This first chapter attempts to develop means by which dynamic corporate expression of Christian faith can be experienced through a corporate tradition of Free Church worship. Subsequently, purposeful dynamics of worship will aim at cultivating the thesis in the context of a 21st-century microcosm of active Church of the Brethren CCRC elders. Each of these topics will serve to develop a dynamic which informs 21st-century Church of the Brethren ministry leaders to reach for excellence in congregational life through integrating worship with fruitful aging Christians.

⁸ Carl Desportes Bowman, *Portrait of a People: The Church of the Brethren at 300* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 2008), 60.

⁹ Glen Weimer, "The Nurture of the Church Through Worship," *Brethren Life & Thought* 6, no. 4 (Autumn 1961), 22.

Free Worship Tradition

The manner of worship experienced by Brethren traditionally qualifies as Free Church worship. Writing for the periodical, *Brethren Life and Thought*, Rev.

Earle Fike, Jr. defines this tradition of worship:

We (Brethren) consider ourselves to be in the “free church” tradition of worship. That essentially means that the pastor and the community of faith are allowed to design worship in a manner that encourages participants to enter deeply into praising and responding to God.¹⁰

In its earliest form, this worship tradition may be described as informal, extemporaneous, and spontaneous. For example, extemporaneous prayer allowed ministry leaders to invite a worshiper to greater personal participation in a gathered setting and to aim at striking greater harmony at inward and outward faith expression. Brethren theologian Dale Brown offers a picture of 18th-century worship:

The early order of worship gave an appearance of spontaneity as the elders [ministry leaders] would exhort one another to “be free, Brethren.” But often planning took place through a prior huddle of ministers or through preparation of exhortations on the part of the participants. Often a text emerged as a theme on which several ministers spoke, referring to the remarks made by a previous brother.¹¹

While Free Church worship can be difficult to neatly define and qualify, it is important to understand the theological roots from which the Brethren have sprung. Brethren theologian Dale R. Stoffer explains the theological roots of thought from which Brethren view the practice of faith especially as

¹⁰ Earle E. Fike, Jr., “The Shape of our Worship,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 49, no 1-2 (Winter-Spring 2004), 61.

¹¹ Donald F. Durnbaugh, editor, *Church of the Brethren: Yesterday and Today* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1986), 76.

demonstrated through such occasions as worship:

...Radical Pietism gave Brethren faith its inner, spiritual, individual character: Anabaptism provided the outward, formal corporate substance. One of the unique aspects of Brethren thought has been the desire to maintain a creative balance between these inner and outer aspects of the faith.¹²

These historic schools of Protestant Christian tradition, Pietism and Anabaptism, guide Brethren ministry leaders to develop means by which Christians foster a relationship with God expressed in both individual and corporate spheres of worship.

As eighteenth century European Brethren became part of the American colonial and subsequent national experience, they would be influenced by other Protestants in the practice of Free Church worship. Three of the earliest defined worship settings for the Brethren were Love Feast [the Brethren observance of Holy Communion], baptism, and preaching services. Carl Bowman, professor of sociology at Bridgewater College, characterizes early traditional Brethren or *Dunker*, corporate worship as preaching services. Bowman writes,

...Sunday morning worship was the bread-and-butter ritual that routinely nourished the Dunker community. Until the 1830s and 1840s, Brethren typically met for worship in members homes. By mid-century, however, they were building what were termed "plain meetinghouses" - simple one-room edifices lacking in stain glass, pulpits and ornamentation....Services were not held in each meetinghouse every Sunday; rather, they were often rotated among neighboring meetinghouses belonging to the same congregation. In this way, the burden of travel could be more evenly distributed among the scattered membership.¹³

Yet Bowman, a sociologist, observes that the community experience of worship

¹² Durnbaugh, *Yesterday and Today*, 44.

¹³ Carl R. Bowman, *Brethren Society: The Cultural Transformation of a 'Peculiar People'* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 64.

was not simply confined to the preaching service but continued as members gathered for meals at one another's homes after the preaching service.

What were the common elements which qualified early worship among the Brethren free worship tradition? Nancy Rosenberger Faus, former professor of Church of the Brethren seminary Bethany Theological Seminary, writes regarding the connection between spirituality and worship among the Brethren,

Brethren worship was born out of small groups meetings of people who met regularly to sing, pray, and study Scripture together. They had broken away from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Anabaptist and Radical Pietistic movements in Germany and were looking for a way to express their spiritual needs in an intimate relationship with God and with each other. Their discipline of studying Scripture, praying, and singing unquestionably helped shape a Brethren style of spirituality and worship.¹⁴

Faus explains how Brethren spirituality experienced in worship begins, "Although Brethren do not consciously make a connection between spirituality and worship, they come to worship to be filled, to be renewed, to grow in the spirit."¹⁵ Professor Faus supports the value of spirituality enhanced through corporate worship by quoting the late Church of the Brethren professor and President of Juniata College, C.C. Ellis from his writing, *Studies in Doctrine and Devotion*:

To live in the atmosphere of the Spirit is to live a life of prayer. We shall need to remember that this atmosphere so favorable to Christian growth is most likely to be found in the midst of Christian people.

The services of the church furnish not only an environment most favorable for growth, but also rich spiritual food for the soul that

¹⁴ Nancy Rosenberger Faus, "Spirituality and Worship in the Church of the Brethren," *Brethren Life and Thought* 29 (Fall 1994), 241.

¹⁵ Faus, *Spirituality and Worship*, 245.

hungers and thirsts after righteousness. We ought not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. And as God speaks to us through his Word and we commune with him in prayer, we will come to recognize more and more the real need of the assembly of God's people as a place of spiritual growth and uplift.¹⁶

In practice this balance in Free Church worship, becoming like Jesus and belonging to community, is facilitated and sustained through the Protestant ideal of the priesthood of all believers. Dale Stoffer, adjunct professor of Ashland Theological Seminary, qualifies the means of oversight in community worship, "...because they are members intimately joined in the body of Christ, each has a priestly office to perform for others. All are to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of brothers and sisters in the faith."¹⁷ Ministry leadership traditionally has given oversight to this mutuality among members. Ministry leaders aim to engage local community in inward and outward practice of faith and, at the same time, face the challenge of taking purposeful approaches with Christians at key junctures, for example, faith challenges like fruitful aging.

Free worship tradition appears to be a good ecumenical model that Christians of several worship traditions may be able to appreciate and find common elements under which they may unite in worshipping God. Dr. Dale Brown, retired Bethany Theological Seminary professor, suggests that free worship tradition has emerged recently true to its history and roots:

The most consistent characteristic of Brethren worship today [1986] is its growing variety. It is true that some congregations may be enslaved by the necessity of maintaining the typical Protestant style

¹⁶ C. C. Ellis, "Christian Growth," *Studies in Doctrine and Devotion* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Publishing House, n. d.), 33-34, in Nancy Rosenberger Faus, "Spirituality and Worship in the Church of the Brethren," *Brethren Life and Thought* 29 (Fall 1994), 245.

¹⁷ Durnbaugh, *Yesterday and Today*, 53.

of worship of several decades ago. Others may be faddish in their compulsion to experiment with the new. For the most part, however, there is growing freedom to appropriate from others and experiment with new forms. In some congregations there has been a movement to more formal worship with congregational participation and classical choral music. At the same time in many places there has been a movement toward greater spontaneity and informality as evidenced in the popularity of the time of "sharing of joys and concerns."¹⁸

In a more recent study, Carl Bowman comments on four types of worship, two *conventional* and two *contemporary*, which appear to qualify the tastes of all Church of the Brethren respondents to a 2006 survey, not just those of greater than 50 years old. Surprisingly, the results reflected appreciation for all four types of worship by those greater than 50 years of age. Bowman suggests:

It would be a mistake, however, to surmise that the worship preferences of today's Brethren are as neatly classified into conventional or contemporary categories as the services themselves. The truth is that some prefer conventional forms: organ music, litanies and readings, and hymns with four-part harmony. Some prefer innovations: contemporary praise songs, electric guitars and drums, projecting onto a large screen, and drama and dance. And many are happy with a mix of the two. For example, two-thirds of those who feel positive about contemporary praise songs also feel positive about hymns with four-part harmony. And those who are neutral about one are likely to be neutral about the other. So support for traditional and contemporary forms should probably be gauged independently, like temperature and barometric pressure, rather than being viewed as opposite ends of a single spectrum.¹⁹

On the campus of Lebanon Valley Brethren Home many Free Church worship tradition denominations are represented, other than the Church of the Brethren, including Churches of God, Mennonites, Brethren in Christ, Baptist, Evangelical Congregational, Evangelical Free, and Independent Bible

¹⁸ Durnbaugh, *Yesterday and Today*, 76-77.

¹⁹ Bowman, *Portrait*, 57-58.

congregations with Pietistic and Anabaptist roots. It stands to reason that a Free Church worship setting like that found at LVBH holds great potential for ministry leaders to qualify corporate elements which engage Christians in the worship of God.

Presently, corporate worship at Lebanon Valley Brethren Home is led by different ministry leadership teams each week. More than thirty-five congregations of ten different Protestant denominations share worship leadership in the Di Matteo Worship Center. One task of the chaplain is to accommodate congregational ministry leaders with the logistical means to maximize the experience for leaders and participants. This accommodation can involve simple to complex systems of technology that aim at offering worship to meet both the ritual and spiritual needs of elder participants. Additionally, the chaplain acts as facilitator gauging how participants value the worship experience together with congregational ministry leaders. This is an important setting for ministry leaders to qualify personal ministry approaches with elder participants.

Twenty-first Century Microcosm

CCRCs, regardless of whether or not they are faith-based, value the role of ministry leaders in developing regular on-site spiritual enrichment such as worship and study settings. What should set faith-based CCRCs above the rest is the opportunity to engage theoretical and practical ministry approaches. The twenty-first century brings with it a plethora of occasions for intentional

approaches through which ministry leaders, regardless of the ministry setting, can capture a vision for older adult ministry in the local setting. Sadly though, many busy ministry leaders and congregational committees chose reactive approaches rather than proactive. Reactive ministry and congregational approaches may simply entertain or distract older adults, whereas a proactive approach can also offer them opportunities for significant spiritual enrichment.

In anticipation of the Church of the Brethren's tercentennial, Carl D. Bowman conducted a survey of the denomination titled, *Portrait of a People: The Church of the Brethren at 300*, in order to capture a snapshot of the Brethren moving into the three hundredth celebration year. While this study has already been cited, it is important to reflect on the implications it has to engage in purposeful elder ministry approaches. Bowman's survey included such topics as family life, background, religious activities, and congregational life, pertinent to this thesis. Of the respondent age groupings 36 percent were greater than 65 years old, along with 28 percent being aged 50-64; and 6 percent of all respondents surveyed lived in retirement communities.²⁰ The later 28 percent represented the number of persons who anticipated retirement age in the next 10 to 15 years and who may eventually seek living in a CCRC by choice or health crisis. According to Bowman's study, corporate worship attendance is a priority with 21st-century Brethren.

Whatever its form or flavor, corporate worship remains central to the Church of the Brethren. Seventy-one percent of today's Brethren report that they attend worship on a weekly basis. Half (51 percent) say that they attend Sunday School at least a couple of times a month.

²⁰ Bowman, *Portrait*, 120-121.

And nearly half (47 percent) spend more than an hour a week in congregational activities *beyond* worship services.²¹

Bowman, who conducted a denominational survey earlier in 1985, qualifies the results by comparing the survey responses with actual Church of the Brethren statistics for 2005. At the same time, he observes that the 71 percent attendance figures compares almost exactly to the 1985 results.²²

From the perspective of ministry leaders of the Church of the Brethren and other Protestants coming to the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there is much to consider regarding how ministry leaders can proactively or purposefully equip a generation of elder Christians for worship in the decades to come. Church of the Brethren authors and long-term care professionals, Harvey Kline and Warren Eshbach offer ministry leaders a vision of God's kingdom fulfilled in the lives of aging Christians:

As children of God, we are part of the created order which passes from the earthly scene. As disciples of Christ and citizens of his Kingdom, our hope for meaningful life rests in the fulfillment of the Kingdom and the inner renewal which takes place in our spirits as we pass through this life. To be aware of one's self in the aging process is to realize that we are "growing into the fullness of the stature of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). To grow this way is to confront aging with confidence and strength in the Christ who calls us to full maturity in him.²³

Corporate worship can become a medium by which ministry leaders begin to purposefully engage aging Christians in becoming more like Jesus. Let this proposition guide ministry leaders to develop dynamic corporate worship where

²¹ Bowman, *Portrait*, 55.

²² Bowman, *Portrait*, 95-96.

²³ Harvey Kline and Warren Eshbach, *A Future With Hope: Aging creatively in Christian community* (Elgin, IL: The Brethren Press, 1978), 38-39.

Church of the Brethren Aging Christians of CCRCs can experience being "planted in the house of the Lord" whether in the congregation or in fellowship with other Christians.

For ministry leaders in a CCRC or fellowship setting it is important to find a way to pass along to congregational ministry colleagues observations which will help to guide intentional means toward corporate spiritual enrichment for elders. It is the aim of this writing to begin conversation with elders and ministry leaders to enhance corporate worship experiences with elders and benefit the spiritual life for the Christian community. As elders at Lebanon Valley Brethren Home comment on their spiritual mutuality with youth and young adults, they say, "We need them, as much as they need us."

Purposeful Worship Dynamics

Historically, Brethren were a very practical people who met to worship in houses, shops, mills, and barns of members, rather than investing time and resources in a building. One of the first purchases by the Germantown, Pennsylvania Brethren was the Pettikoffer House which served as a large group gathering space for a growing congregation. Being biblically and community minded, the purchase of the Pettikoffer House gave them not only a larger place to gather for worship but also another medium through which they could minister the love of Jesus Christ. This worship house, or meetinghouse, would additionally serve as an outward expression in providing shelter for one whose financial resources were dependent upon the benevolence of Christians.

Mary Rosenberger in her book *Caring: A History of Brethren Homes 1889-1989*, quotes author and historian Martin Grove Brumbaugh²⁴ who tells of the Pettikoffer House's significance in serving as a practical model of community ministry. In other words, a place of corporate worship became synonymous with benevolent ministry:

It was at the Germantown congregation...where the earliest model for today's Brethren homes and hospitals were organized. The congregation met in homes until 1760 when the Pettikoffer House was made available to the congregation for its assemblies. However, "a room and the kitchen were reserved for free housing for a widow."

In 1770, when the Germantown meetinghouse was erected, the Pettikoffer House was remodeled to serve as "an old folks" home, in which the poor of the congregation were sheltered, clothed, and fed at the expense of the congregation. M.G. Brumbaugh called it "the oldest home for the poor established by the Brotherhood" and it was known as "The Widow's Home" for almost a century.²⁵

While little is written on developing dynamic worship with Church of the Brethren elders, this historic snapshot gives the impression that it was not only important for Brethren to become like Jesus, but to discover how that looks in the context of belonging to community. Through a review of literature relative to theology, classic faith development theory, and Brethren worship it is hoped that the subject at hand will lead to inform ministry leaders on the topic of worship development with elders. The dynamic necessary to achieve purposeful worship, regardless of participant age, includes both the outward and inward qualities of Christian worship. In this study these dynamics will be

²⁴ Martin Grove Brumbaugh, *A History of the German Baptist Brethren in Europe and America* (Mt. Morris, IL: Brethren Publishing House, 1899), 170.

²⁵ Mary Sue H. Rosenberger, *Caring: A History of Brethren Homes 1889-1989* (Elgin, IL: The Brethren's Homes and Hospital Association, 1989), 16.

defined as *becoming like Jesus* (inward) and *belonging to Christian community* (outward). How does this take place in a setting where the needs of individuals can vary, regardless of age or faith maturity? This should not be developed any differently in a CCRC than in the local congregation on any given Sunday morning. On the other hand, many ministry leaders appear to struggle with coming to terms with developing dynamic worship with elder Christians.

Brethren pastor Glen Weimer published an article in *Brethren Life & Thought*, titled, "Christian Worship: The Keystone in the Arch of Life" which discusses two dynamic elements of Christian worship:

In the Old Testament there is frequent clash between prophetic and priestly worship. The prophetic stood on the side of the creative - the priestly on the side of conservation and continuity with the past. The prophetic was concerned with what God was saying to man in the present, what He was offering to man, what promise of life or death was facing society.

The priestly concept held firmly to the past and its heritage, to the written word, to the tested ritual, to worthy sacrifices placed on the altar...genuine worship which can lead life to true fulfillment will combine these two great principles.²⁶

Weimer indicates that outward participation in the ritual of corporate worship can have the same spiritual value as the inner experience of worship.

Weimer's article on nurture through worship may have been the original call defining Earl Fike's echoed definition of "Free Church worship" tradition:

A vital form [of worship] must give both God and man freedom; it must focus on God and proclaim God; it must provide for penitence and confession; it must unite the worshiper with the whole church on earth and in heaven; it must give opportunity for individual and corporate affirmation of faith; and it must make possible

²⁶ Glen Weimer, "Christian Worship: The Keystone in the Arch of Life," *Brethren Life and Thought* Volume 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1955), 42.

recommitment to Christ's cause. Therefore, the form should give the worshipers the chance for involvement, for participation.²⁷

Weimer's contribution at this point enlarges the church context as the church universal, what some would refer to as the church on earth and in heaven. *For All Who Minister*, a ministry manual for ministry leaders in the Church of the Brethren, considers worship as the focus of the gathered Church:

Worship is a meaningful and genuine meeting with God and Christian sisters and brothers. It is a time in which we together celebrate and affirm the good news of Jesus Christ. As God comes to us, we respond to God by participating in a rehearsal of our faith, followed by the enactment of that faith in the world. God is the one we worship. We come to worship expectantly: to praise God, to give thanks to God, to confess to God, and to proclaim God's wondrous acts. We then go back into the world as transformed people.²⁸

Many seminary trained ministry leaders are given the tools to engage in "general practitioner" ministry, unless enlightened to create purposeful approaches in the life of the local congregation. Congregational ministry leadership recognizes that their field of influence reaches beyond the four walls of the meetinghouse. In the 21st-century ministry leaders may be called upon to lead worship in faith-based CCRCs composed of elders in transition through either choice or life crisis. In other words, Christian elders have chosen to move to a retirement community, or they have found themselves in a circumstance requiring long-term health care assistance.

While the Church of the Brethren offers instruction toward purposeful elder ministry, a writer akin to Brethren thought offers approaches toward intentional 21st-century elder ministry compatible with Pietistic and Anabaptist

²⁷ Glen Weimer, "The Nurture of the Church Through Worship," 26.

²⁸ Earl W. Fike, Jr., editor, *For All Who Minister* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1993), 3.

thought expressed through free church worship tradition. In his book, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century*, ordained United Methodist minister Richard Gentzler articulates intentional efforts toward older adult ministry built around the following principles:

- to nurture faith by acknowledging both the blessings and the losses of later life and recognizing that interdependence, not independence, is of greater value.
- to build Christian community by developing a structure in our churches that encourages and facilitates intentional ministry by, with, and for older adults.
- to equip older adults for faithful living and service by offering a fresh perspective, one that sees older adults as active participants in contributing to the church's life and mission and in meeting the spiritual needs of its members.²⁹

Gentzler's ministry principles suggest that elders, as with Christians of any age, are valuable active participants in the overall ministry of the church. What the above principles further say is that a host of intentional opportunities available within the life of every Christian community with elders. A setting, in accord with Weimer's earlier proposition of spiritual health and worship, which gauges purposeful ministry, is the people of Jesus in corporate worship.

The Task

Corporate worship defines piety and identity for those of Free Church worship tradition. It is the proposition of this thesis that in developing dynamic corporate worship 21st-century ministry leaders will discover

²⁹ Richard H. Gentzler, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century: An Inquiry Approach* (TN: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 91-92.

thought expressed through free church worship tradition. In his book, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century*, ordained United Methodist minister Richard Gentzler articulates intentional efforts toward older adult ministry built around the following principles:

- to nurture faith by acknowledging both the blessings and the losses of later life and recognizing that interdependence, not independence, is of greater value.
- to build Christian community by developing a structure in our churches that encourages and facilitates intentional ministry by, with, and for older adults.
- to equip older adults for faithful living and service by offering a fresh perspective, one that sees older adults as active participants in contributing to the church's life and mission and in meeting the spiritual needs of its members.²⁹

Gentzler's ministry principles suggest that elders, as with Christians of any age, are valuable active participants in the overall ministry of the church. What the above principles further say is that a host of intentional opportunities available within the life of every Christian community with elders. A setting, in accord with Weimer's earlier proposition of spiritual health and worship, which gauges purposeful ministry, is the people of Jesus in corporate worship.

The Task

Corporate worship defines piety and identity for those of Free Church worship tradition. It is the proposition of this thesis that in developing dynamic corporate worship 21st-century ministry leaders will discover ways to offer

²⁹ Richard H. Gentzler, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century: An Inquiry Approach* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 91-92.

fruitful aging Christians a place to grow in faith. The medium of corporate worship holds the potential to revitalize Christians who seek the fruit of righteousness and a place in God's household. This writing aims at opening the conversation of CCRC ministry leadership and congregational ministry leadership toward the end of reaching for excellence in pastoral care to God's people.

Church of the Brethren CCRC elders on the campus of Lebanon Valley Brethren Home will serve as a representative microcosm of older adults who hold valuable keys for 21st-century ministry leaders to engage in purposeful ministry to a people "planted in the house of the Lord." Consistent with Richard Gentzler's ministry guides, these keys may become approaches for ministry leaders to regard aging Christians as active, intentional, and interdependent ministry partners in the congregation. Consequently, a study like this may lead to reintegrating worship which fulfills the relationship that one experiences in becoming like Jesus and belonging to a larger community of believers. It is hoped that this thesis will strengthen the idea that elder Christians have much to contribute and gain from participation in corporate worship.

The project design will involve a two step process, first a questionnaire seeking resident elder input regarding meaningful worship and second, after collecting the responses, report results to a focus discussion group to qualify the data gathered. Responses will be gathered in the form of a survey distributed to Brethren elders living on the campus of Lebanon Valley Brethren Home, who remain active in corporate worship. Toward the end of purposeful corporate

worship development, survey data will inform ministry leaders embarking on the adventure of 21st-century ministry. The results may serve as a base upon which congregational ministry leadership can be proactive in future worship life. Results may suggest a means for congregations who pursue options to develop operational faith and practice through worship.

II. THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Call to Worship

It is good to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night....

-Psalm 92:1-2

All Israel expressed trust, praise, and thanksgiving to God through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. All Israel expressed love and devotion to God through the disciplines of prayer, tithing, fasting, and scripture reading. Of the righteous it is written, "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, 'The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him'" (Psalm 92:14-15). Young and old gathered, as one, in corporate worship to remember what God promised, and fulfilled in the past, thus affirming they *belonged* to God.

Two dramatic pictures of Israel in corporate worship describe spiritual pinnacles with God. First, as divided Israel is experiencing an ambivalent relationship with God, those advising King Josiah discover and read the long forgotten Book of the Law of God. Judah, "from the least to the greatest," assembled to hear King Josiah read the Book of the Covenant. In response, the King and people reaffirmed the covenant with God, removed and destroyed all of the signs of pagan worship, and celebrated a long overdue Passover Feast together. In this corporate worship and response, Judah remembered that they belonged to God (2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34, 35).

The second picture of corporate worship is found in post-exilic Jerusalem.

In the course of rebuilding the destroyed city, Ezra the priest was appointed by God to redirect Judah in efforts to rebuild the Temple and reestablish worship. Subsequently, the foundation of the Temple was laid and a celebration of thanksgiving was marked. Ezra and the Levites led an emotional gathering which evoked tears of sorrow from elders of the community and shouts of joy from the rest. This celebration would inspire later worship reforms for people to gather for worship in house settings outside of the Temple, namely synagogues. This worship, experienced by post-exilic elders and others, reached a crescendo of response to affirm the congregation's identity and continued devotion to God (Ezra 3).

Following the first advent and ascension of Jesus Christ, the first generation Church gathered in houses to express a shared faith in God through prayer, breaking of bread, and hearing the word of God (Acts 2:46, 47). For the followers of Jesus, worship ritual or expressions of faith occurred not only as a statement of *belonging* to God, but also of *becoming* like Christ Jesus. These Old and New Testament perspectives on life for the righteous would give rich meaning to the children of God in the ages to come as they sought to express their love for and devotion to God. One of the unbroken practices characterizing God's people of any age is expressing faith through corporate worship.

In present American culture, Christian worship takes on new life as the world changes. Twenty-first century worship is not what earlier Christians may have envisioned. Christians living and aging in the late 20th and early 21st centuries have experienced extreme changes in ways to express devotion and

love to God through worship. While present technology has offered libraries of information and diverse forms of communication, it generally does little to create a satisfying relationship with other Christians and with God.

As primary spiritual caregivers, ministry leaders have attempted to respond to the spiritual needs of aging laity basically in the same manner as for any other Christian. Many busy ministry leaders must be general spiritual practitioners, and thus respond reactively, rather than proactively, to spiritual needs. Regrettably, pastoral approaches have lacked purpose beyond that of keeping elders entertained or busy. Historically, spirited worship at revivals and camp meetings satisfied one generation of elders; yet some of the present generation wants nothing to do with such old-fashioned and tedious ways. At the same time, a different generation discovered radio and television ministries to be an accessible worship substitute, but has found it lacks the personal touch of attending worship at the meetinghouse.¹

While pastoral care approaches to aging Christians appears to elude some ministry leaders, others have found it a field ripe with possibilities for engaging elders toward either maintaining or enriching faith in God. Outwardly, the person may appear to be growing older and lacking enthusiasm or marked mental connectedness; yet inwardly, the soul may be as alive as a well-tended branch. The spiritual task for ministry leaders is to get past the exterior of the person in order to discover what engages the spiritual well-being and vitality of elders.

¹ *Meetinghouse* was a familiar term used by early Church of the Brethren members to refer to the place where God's people gathered for corporate worship.

Biblical Context of Fruitful Aging

The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.

-Psalm 92:12-13

The purpose of this theological framework is to gather biblical principles by which vibrant communities of faith can develop worship with aging Christians with the purpose of “flourish[ing] in the courts of our God” (Psalm 92:13b). Furthermore, these elders “will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, “The Lord is upright...”” (verses 14, 15a). While the context for this thesis and subsequent project serve to enhance fellowships outside of a congregational setting, it is hoped that the principles and outcomes discovered will help effectively integrate elders to the local congregation and to an on-going relationship with local elder fellowships.

While no summary statement can be found in either the Old or New Testament regarding spiritually fruitful aging for Christians, theological ideals help qualify fruitful spirituality and aging enhanced by corporate worship. Particularly the New Testament serves as the “rule for faith and practice” for those of Brethren faith perspective. Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is a valuable guide to spiritually enriched living. Relative to spiritual growth Jesus says, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). Thus, the task before us is to develop worship which allows aging Christians the opportunities to either maintain or continue to grow in faith. From the perspective of the Bible, fruitful aging can be determined in what it means to be created in the image of God, to

confront a transitory life, and to become fulfilled in one's humanity, based upon the Scriptures.

The theological framework for this writing begins with the Bible as the foundational resource and current literature on spiritually fruitful aging Christians as a supporting resource. To qualify the theological perspective of the thesis, it is hoped that this text will be applied to ministry settings, within and compatible to the Church of the Brethren. Supporting resources used for this theological framework of fruitful Christian aging include sources found either within or akin to the denomination. Two Church of the Brethren texts, a book by Harvey Kline and Warren Eshbach titled, *A Future with Hope: Aging creatively in Christian community*;² and the Church of the Brethren, *Statement on Aging*³ are the most substantive works produced within the denomination to present a biblical perspective or theology of aging. But these texts, copyrighted in 1978 and 1985 respectively, must be qualified as dated and abbreviated at best.

Created by God

...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

-Genesis 1:27

The book of Genesis, written by people of faith, addresses the issues of life from the perspective of the Creator. A key theological concept, found in several writings regarding a theology of aging, begins with the ideal of being

² Harvey Kline and Warren Eshbach, *A Future With Hope: Aging creatively in Christian community* (Elgin, IL: The Brethren Press, 1978).

³ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, *Statement on Aging* (Elgin: Church of the Brethren General Board, 1985).

created in “the image of God.” According to Millard J. Erickson, there are primarily three separate views that Christian theologians hold regarding “the image of God” in humanity. The views which Erickson suggests are: substantive, relational, and functional.⁴

These views qualify evidence of and approaches consistent with “the image of God” in humanity. By theological definition, Erickson defines the *substantive* view by offering, “...the image consist(s) of certain characteristics within the very nature of man, characteristics which may be physical or psychological/spiritual.”⁵ Erickson concludes succinctly, “[The image of God] refers [in substance] to something man *is* rather than something he *has* or *does*.”⁶ The terms “has” and “does” represent the *relational* and *functional* views, respectively, in Erickson’s comparison. Erickson writes,

Every human being is God’s creature made in God’s own image. God endowed each of us with the powers of personality that make possible worship and service of our Creator. When we are using those powers to those ends, we are most fully what God intended us to be. It is then that we are most completely human.⁷

While Erickson’s work is strictly general Christian theology, further reading reveals that Christian theologians, on the topic of aging, have aimed at reconciling the idea of the image of God in relation to the issue of aging.

To qualify Erickson’s substantive view of the image of God, through the lens of a theology of aging, theologian Van Tatenhove offers,

The significance of the biblical and theological teaching about the

⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 498.

⁵ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 498.

⁶ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 512.

⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 517.

image of God in human nature is that each individual is to be accepted and respected as a creation of God. This means that people created in the image of God do not diminish in worth or sanctity as they move through the aging process. To be human is to represent God. Therefore, the image of God is not something people achieve or something people do. Rather, it is what one is to be in God's intended plan.⁸

While it is difficult to tell whether Stephen Sapp would contend or confer with Erickson and Van Tatenhove in the substantive view, Sapp hints at a *relational* view of the image of God as standing between the Old Testament "image of God" and to the New Testament ideal of "incarnation." Sapp writes,

...the creation of human beings in God's image meant for Israel that every person possessed worth and dignity and deserved to be treated accordingly. Similarly, for Christianity the clearest confirmation of the value and the significance of every human being comes from the Incarnation, from the fact that God took human form: 'In the beginning [note the echo of Gen. 1] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:1, 14). The Incarnation shows unequivocally that human nature is worthy of the most intimate union possible with divine nature.⁹

While it is then generally understood that "the image of God" is substantive, there are ways that this substance is made evident. When considering the Old and New Covenant perspectives, parts of the "image" are presented in the functional (becoming) and relational (belonging) views. Just as the Apostle Paul is often accused of confusing the issues of faith and works, so faith presents itself in ways which reveal both piety and identity in the life of the believer. For persons of faith, it is important to know that one's soul value never

⁸ Melvin Kimble, Susan H. McFadden, James W. Ellor, and James J. Seeber, editors, *Aging, Spirituality, and Religion: A Handbook* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 420.

⁹ Stephen Sapp, *Full of Years: Aging & the Elderly in the Bible & Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 99-100. Note: the brackets and parentheses are used in Sapp's text.

depreciates. Fruitful aging Christians, like spiritually maturing youths, are known by the results or spiritual fruit that they bear (John 15:5, 8). While this is not a fail-safe statement in every situation, results can still be seen.

Confronting the Transitory

Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

-2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Life is transitory. Aging is a real process experienced by all made in the image of God. In confronting the transitory, two potentially meaningful thoughts must be considered. With aging comes the realization that the body is in decline, but the spirit holds the potential for thriving despite the decline. It is important for ministry leaders to come to terms with these issues so as not to assume that elders are simply biding their time until death. From a pastoral care perspective, faith development in old age holds the potential of enriching the life of individuals and those who love elder Christians in the church.

In the book of Psalms, the writers poetically speak of the temporality of life in relation to its brevity and its decline. In the above-cited scripture from 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul speaks of the regressive frailty of the outward person, yet the progressive strength in the inward person. This and other scriptures remind the faithful that decline due to aging involves frustration and adjustment. Depending on the school of thought, this decline may or may not be part of the original image of God in humanity, but it has become part of the

present order of the earthly realm.

The Apostle Paul's first epistle to the church at Corinth clarified for the church what it meant to be resurrection people, in a transitory life. First Corinthians 15 is a statement of affirmation and proclamation regarding the risen Christ. In the context, Paul writes of the substantive form that Christians will bear at death before the resurrection. In a vivid picture, portrayed as a planted seed, Paul explains that at death a person is "planted" in the perishable body, awaiting the resurrected body yet to be. At the text's conclusion, he refers to the earthly body--the one that is of the present order--as perishable and mortal, but lifts up the ideal of a resurrected body that will qualify one for the immortal, imperishable kingdom of God. In the same manner as Christ is raised from the dead, so the faithful will be raised immortal and imperishable.

The issue of aging humanity is not specified in the Genesis account of the image of God, but it is understood in other contexts of scripture that human beings made in God's image live an orderly temporal life: birth, infancy, childhood, youth, adult, elder, and death. Scripturally, it is understood that both a current transitory and future eternal order of heaven and earth exist. Evangelical theologian Van Tatenhove proposes the following theological considerations related to the meaning of aging:

First, because human beings are created in the image of God, aging is part of human experience. Second, successfully to negotiate change through the stages of life, each individual must accept and participate in God's created order. Third, adjustment to the later years of aging must include the development of hope rooted in spiritual maturity and experienced in the acceptance of one's own frailty.¹⁰

¹⁰ Kimble, *Aging, Spirituality, and Religion*, 418-419.

Van Tatenhove's observations lead to the conclusion that intentional spiritual development and relinquishment help one contextualize the issues of frailty in light of future hope. Beyond this, the New Testament book of Revelation records a new earth and new heaven; the old order and new order of life include, "... no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Revelation 21:4b).

Stephen Sapp, using a commentary by John A. T. Robinson, concludes that "flesh" [Greek: *sarx*] refers to the part of humanity that is made by God, and the "body" [Greek: *soma*] refers to that part of humanity that potentially can be used for God.¹¹ Sapp writes, "[The] distinction between the *soma*'s capacity for relationship with God and the *sarx*'s lack of such capacity explains why Paul can assert that the *soma* and not the *sarx* will inherit the kingdom of God and share in the Resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:50, 53)."¹²

The transitory quality of life allows one to reflect on being made in God's image and what brings spiritual satisfaction through all the changes of life. Roman Catholic theologians, Henri J. M. Nouwen and Walter J. Gaffney, consider aging as a process of life fulfillment. They write, "Aging is... the gradual fulfillment of the life cycle in which receiving matures in giving and living makes dying worthwhile."¹³ At the same time, the fruits of our labor are evident in the

¹¹ John A. T. Robinson, *The Body* (London: SCM), 1952, in Stephen Sapp, *Full of Years: Aging & the Elderly in the Bible & Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 103. For greater comprehension, it is best to refer directly to Robinson's book quoted in many authoritative theologies.

¹² Sapp, *Full of Years*, 103.

¹³ Henri J. M. Nouwen, and Walter J. Gaffney, *Aging: The Fulfillment of Life* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, A Division of Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), 14.

manner of gratitude and obedience expressed to God through worship. The Apostle Paul concludes 1 Corinthians 15 by saying, “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58b). While the fruit of life may not be realized in the present, there are indications that one aspect of life is yet to be revealed.

It is in the span of human life where scholars and students examine what brings meaning to the transient journey of aging. The theories of human and faith development are helpful in framing religion’s role in the context of human experience. In 1981 theologian James Fowler published a theoretical paradigm for discussing human faith development. As originator of human faith development theory, Fowler was the first to synthesize theories of human psychology relative to social and emotional development (Erickson), moral development (Kohlberg), cognitive development (Piaget), and hierarchy of needs (Maslow) in the context of religion. It was Fowler’s observation, in light of personal life crises, that six stages of faith development can occur, regardless of religious tradition. Fowler writes of faith,

...[F]aith involves an alignment of the heart or will, a commitment of loyalty and trust.... [F]aith is our way of discerning and committing ourselves to centers of value and power that exert ordering force in our lives.... [F]aith, as imagination, grasps the ultimate conditions of our existence, unifying them into a comprehensive image in light of which we shape our responses and initiatives.¹⁴

Fowler’s theory remains the standard paradigm of scholars and students who

¹⁴ James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981), 24-25, in Harold J. Koenig, *Aging and God* (Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, Inc., 1994), 88. Dr. Harold J. Koenig is professor of Psychiatry and Internal Medicine and Director of the *Program on Religion, Aging, and Health* in the Center for Aging at Duke University Medical Center. Koenig’s book is a monumental text for American gerontological scholars and students.

qualify religious studies through a psycho-social theoretical framework.

With the dawning of the 21st century, scholars and students alike valued yet challenged some assumptions in Fowler's theory of faith development.

Harold J. Koenig challenges Fowler's faith development theory from the standpoint of aging and sets faith development within Judeo-Christian faith tradition. Based upon two major studies of older adults, Koenig writes on the thesis of successful aging. Koenig defines "successful aging" to qualify his study and results of faith development for those in older adults:

...[S]uccessful aging involves how older adults see themselves fitting into their world and what purpose, if any, they play. Purpose involves having a goal, a vision, a reason to live, a reason to get up in the morning, a reason to struggle and fight against the forces that would overwhelm and destroy.¹⁵

In line with Fowler's theory, Koenig defines the operative contents of faith as "...the focus of ultimate concern, will center on God and on a person's relationship with God (as opposed to faith in self, profession, pleasure, possession, institution, or social group)."¹⁶ Koenig's book explores the relationship between religion and mental health, human development theory, recent studies, practical issues, unique issues of aging, and end of life issues. The study is voluminous, yet is a treasure on later life faith development issues. Regarding the results or fruit of mature faith, Koenig summarizes,

When religious motivations take on an intrinsic quality, mature adult faith becomes possible. Persons are then faced with the task of reorienting and reorganizing their view of the world to bring it into line with these motivations. Individuals must now integrate their faith into new ways of living, reacting, and interacting with others.

¹⁵ Harold J. Koenig, *Aging and God* (Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, Inc., 1994), xxiv.

¹⁶ Koenig, *Aging and God*, xxiv-xxv.

Repeated experiences of the successful resolution of problems through reliance on God strengthens and matures faith. A personal history develops that can be looked back on during future trials to give hope and confidence for a good outcome.¹⁷

For Koenig, the scientist, successful aging and mature faith result from one's ability to cope and not lose hope when confronted with the transitory issues of aging.

Therefore, confronting the transitory character of human experience gives a person of faith the opportunity to sort out not only meaning to life, but also contextualize the experience of aging. For persons of faith, sharing the process of aging holds great opportunity for Christians to learn and teach each other what it means to endure and value a transient existence in relationship with God.

Becoming in Jesus Christ

I [Jesus said to the disciples] am the vine; you are the branches. If a man [anyone] remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

-John 15:5

Spiritual maturity in Christ has no age limit. The 1985 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren defined aging in the context of God's created order by affirming, "All life is a gift of God. Aging, the living out of that gift, is a life-long experience. Aging is an interrelated process involving social, spiritual, psychological, and biological dimensions."¹⁸ While the Annual Conference statement does not define terminology, it does offer an important point of view,

¹⁷ Harold Koenig, *Aging and God*, 133.

¹⁸ Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, *Statement on Aging*, 1.

namely, that aging “is a life-long experience” and “interrelated process.” The *Statement on Aging* continues, “The later years are a time for spiritual growth and maturation.”¹⁹ This ideal affirms that the later years are an opportunity for Christian elders not just to tell what they know, but also to learn and grow in Christ.

To qualify the life-long process of fruitful aging, Scripture reflects the topic of aging in the context of divine covenant and community covenant. An elder of Old Testament perspective offers wisdom on what fulfills life, “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole [duty] of man [humans]” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14a). God’s word calls Christians to personal devotion which leads to spiritual growth and maturity in Christ at any stage of life. Richard and Judith Hays suggest, “...the Christian practice of growing old is a lifelong habit of believing God’s witness in the Scriptures and acting on it, for as long as God gives life.”²⁰

Discussion now turns from the image of God emerging within us to what it means to be fulfilled by becoming like Jesus Christ. *Becoming* like Jesus evidences the emerging “image of God” within the Christian. Jesus Christ is the one, for the Christian, who completely fulfills what God desires to express in humanity. Millard Erickson’s theological discussion about how Jesus lived his life leads to three emerging conclusions regarding evidence of the image of God

¹⁹ *Statement on Aging*, 2.

²⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador, and David Cloutier, editors, *Growing Old in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 18.

in humans:

It is God's intention that [like Jesus] a similar sense of fellowship (John 17), obedience (Luke 22:42), and love (Matthew 9:36; 10:6) characterize man's relationship to God, and that humans be bound together with one another in love. We are completely human only when manifesting these characteristics.²¹

Fellowship, obedience, and love are high aims giving evidence of the spiritual fruit of aging Christians, who desire to become like Jesus.

Protestant theologian John Painter offers a Pauline perspective on the image of God based on 2 Corinthians 3-4: "Being created in the *image* of God and loved by God, each individual person is of infinite worth, not necessarily for what we are at any given moment, but because of what we may become in God's purpose."²² Painter compares the situation of Moses' transformation on Mt Sinai to the work of the Spirit in the life of Christians and continues,

...[I]n and through Christ the *potential* of creation in the *image* of God can be realized. This process is a more deeply spiritual and continuing transformation than was experienced by Moses. It does not fade out. Rather it continues as an ongoing process, from glory to glory, day by day, through the agency of the Spirit of the Lord ([2 Corinthians] 3:18; 4:6, 16).²³

One New Testament elder who models fruitful aging through obedience is Simeon in Luke 2. The elder Jewish priest, serving in his later years, had a vision from God suggesting that he would not see death until he beheld the Lord's Christ. He held fast to this life-long promise and its fulfillment. This motivated him toward *becoming* the person that God desired. Thus with great resolve,

²¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 514-515.

²² Rev. Elizabeth MacKinlay, RN, PhD; Rev. James W. Ellor, PhD, Dmin, DCSW; and Rev. Stephen Pickard, PhD, editors, *Aging, Spirituality, and Pastoral Care: A Multi-National Perspective*, (New York, NY: The Howarth Pastoral Press, 2001), 45.

²³ MacKinlay, *Aging, Spirituality, and Pastoral Care*, 49.

Simeon responds to God in the presence of the Christ Child, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-33).

Simeon, in lifelong obedience, sought to fulfill God's hope for his life, and became the better for it.

One common theme discussed in many reviewed theologies of aging is spiritual fulfillment as it relates to *being* and *doing*. This theme implies the question "Is one's faith maturity measured by *what they do*, or by *who they are*?" In the context of ministry to those who are aging, the task involves outlining approaches that result in spiritual maturity. Van Tatenhove advocates,

The capacity to *do* is not the measure for determining the worth or value of a human being. God's redemptive plan, fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is offered to all persons. Furthermore, even the quality of one's life is not achieved by "good works." Paul writes, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God--not the results of works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).²⁴

Susan Pendleton Jones and L. Gregory Jones offer ideals which strongly contribute to the proposition of how worship affects maintaining and enhancing Christian faith. They write,

...[W]e want to suggest how Christian worship can play a central role in resisting corrupt notions of human personhood and in reshaping our habits of life and thought.... Christian worship provides a site for reclaiming the sense that all of us--from the youngest of children to the oldest of the elderly--are creatures made in the image and likeness of God, and worthy of participation in the praise of God.²⁵

²⁴ Kimble, *Aging, Spirituality, and Pastoral Care*, 422.

²⁵ Hauerwas, *Growing Old in Christ*, 187.

The Joneses further challenge the issues of *doing* and *being*, in the context of worship, by discussing attitudes toward persons who lack full cognition and productivity. The question becomes whether or not those who are physically or cognitively impaired can participate in worship? Is presence in worship enough? Again, the Joneses would argue that personhood is not qualified by either cognition or outward expression like reading, prayer, and singing. Rather the Joneses would respond,

...[W]e are convinced that the contemporary marginalization of the elderly from our families, our communities, and our imaginations is significantly shaped by our broader understanding that personhood is fundamentally rooted in narrow conceptions of rationality and productivity. Challenging those presumptions, and focusing our understanding of personhood on the communal praise of God centered in the Eucharist, will equip us to appreciate more profoundly those elderly in our midst who do not maintain strong cognitive and productive capacities.²⁶

It is important to recognize that Christians have been entrusted with expressions of faith toward the end of spiritual enrichment while becoming like Jesus.

Familiar hymns, prayers, readings, creeds, and ritual practices become tangible expressions of faith to aid the human soul in maintaining and maturing in relationship with God. Yet, what is to become of the maturing Christian who finds that confessing faith in the same way as others does not satisfy? From the perspective of Harold Koenig and the Joneses, it is imperative for ministry leaders to consider that corporate worship for the aged, frail, or demented Christian is as important to them as it is to any other Christian of any other age or cognitive ability.

²⁶ Hauerwas, *Growing Old in Christ*, 187.

The Apostle may respond to present ministry leaders facing the dilemma of whether or not to include a Christian elder in communion:

And we pray...in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:10-12).

Belonging to God's Community

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

-Romans 12:10-12

A fruit or result of actively pursuing full humanity, as understood in Scripture, involves growing relationships with God and with other Christians. As noted earlier, the image of God in humanity is primarily substantive; yet, as a result of active pursuit of the Christian life, fruits will be borne in the life of the believer. Erickson writes that one of the implications of the doctrine of the image of God is, "We experience full humanity only when we are properly related to God."²⁷

Furthermore, the relationship to God is subsequently the result of being found in the relationship with other believers. It was Jesus who interceded for the Apostles and those who would come to believe because of their testimony. Jesus prays, "My prayer is not for them [apostles] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one,

²⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 515.

Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:20,21a). Among those of the Church of the Brethren, the ordinance of baptism marks both the confession of becoming like Jesus and belonging to God's community. Familiarly, Brethren ministry leaders speak of "giving one's heart [in repentance] to God, and one's hand [in relationship] to the church."

Nouwen and Gaffney offer the community perspective that aging has the capacity to enrich both self and others. "Every man and woman who has discovered or rediscovered his or her own aging has a unique opportunity to enrich the quality of his or her own life and that of every fellow human being."²⁸

Stephen Sapp responds to the relational issue by suggesting:

...[H]uman beings are created to be in community, without which the individual, as contemporary society understands the term, hardly exists, and through which men and women are enabled (and required) to demonstrate their full humanity (and their likeness to God).²⁹

For example, mutual responsibility in the first generation church brought the community to a point of contention in Acts 6. It is there that God's Spirit led the Apostles to a decision which would provide community resources for those who were widowed and without family to provide for them. First Corinthians 12:27 instructs, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is part of it."

The type of community found in Acts could lead to believing that mutual responsibility excluded such activity as worship. In the present age, however, much is made of tailor-made worship that attempts to fit one's musical taste, prayer, and preaching style. Each of these preferences, for some elders, seem to

²⁸ Nouwen, *Aging*, 154.

²⁹ Sapp, *Full of Years*, 92.

be more spiritually meaningful than others. But at the same time one can observe just as much disdain in elders for poorly sung hymns as applause for well-performed praise songs. All reasoning seems beyond grasp, yet there is a harmonizing of Spirit which supersedes putting perceptions into words. The Joneses put it in this way,

...Christian worship can play a central role in resisting corrupt notions of human personhood and in reshaping our habits of life and of thought. In particular, we will suggest that Christian worship provides a site for reclaiming the sense that all of us--from the youngest of children to the oldest of the elderly--are creatures made in the image and likeness of God, destined for communion with God, and worthy of participation in the praise of God.³⁰

The intergenerational influence in some congregations may well be one of the unidentified long-term signs of a healthy congregation. It is important not to overlook such observations since this, for some congregations, may well be a part of congregational vitality that is not only neglected, but also lacking. The congregation must never divorce itself from elder Christians.

In 1 John 2, a common theme regarding faith community life is how to integrate Christians of different ages and their devotion to God. This demonstrates an ideal which indicates that the early church was intergenerational, and not segregated by worship expressions that exist in congregations today. Kline and Eshbach call the Brethren to consider God's intent for belonging to Christ and one another:

The church can provide an opportunity for the young to learn from the old and the old to experience the pleasures of associating with and learning from the young. To include this kind of approach as the normal pattern of experience, a model of which is our Sunday

³⁰ Hauerwas, *Growing Old in Christ*, 187.

morning worship service, is to attest to the fact that within our community there is this diversity of age. This is as it should be. God has not intended us to isolate ourselves from one another. Rather, God intends us to be together in community.³¹

Summary

This theology of aging suggests that all people are made in the image of God, life is temporal, and Christian devotion holds the potential for spiritual growth throughout life. This growth or fruitfulness in the later years, like the early years, can be understood by those who belong to God through understanding who they are becoming in Christ. Such growth, as theologian Erickson suggests, can be measured through fellowship, obedience, and love.³²

By way of conclusion, listen to the testimony of one fruitful aging Christian. Several years ago, a retired Church of the Brethren missionary and college president wrote reflections on his aging and nursing home life experience as a devotional for others entering the nursing home environment. In a devotional reading on discovering joy in the experience of aging as a Christian, Chalmer Faw wrote,

Just to love God and your fellow humans more and to feel their love in return is itself a great blessing, one that will grow richer as time goes on. Along with it, of course, you know that life--even your life in the nursing home has many negatives. There are aches and pains, weaknesses of all kinds with an incredible weariness--to say nothing of a nagging worry about your remaining days on earth. Such things are no fun at all [and] your pleasures may be few and far between. Yet there can be joy.³³

³¹ Kline and Eshbach, *A Future With Hope*, 73.

³² Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 514-515.

³³ Chalmer Faw, *Now That I Am Getting Old: Devotions and Reflections on Old Age and the Nursing Home* (Elgin, IL: Association of Brethren Caregivers, 1996), 7.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ministry Leadership

The Apostle Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian ministry leadership charged them, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood."

-Acts 20:28

Shepherding is the common picture of ministry leadership used in both Testaments. The 21st century is a time when specialization has challenged ministry leadership to re-define the role and tasks of Christian vocation. Tim Laniak offers ministry leaders an important maxim in biblical shepherd leadership. A lesson passed from a Bedouin shepherd to an Israeli veterinarian and then to Laniak is to "think flock."¹ Middle Eastern shepherds describe their task in general terms, not specialized terms. A shepherd may oversee ten shepherds or self-manage a flock, a shepherd may own ten or a thousand sheep; yet a shepherd is a shepherd, regardless of flock size. Laniak contextualizes effective leadership in generalized terms. Ministry leaders must carefully weigh leadership decisions in light of the long-term effect on the whole congregation, and not simply a fraction of it.

Dr. Laniak challenges leaders, in the spirit of the Apostle, to look to God as the Great Shepherd and to vocational ministry as shepherding under God's standard, "think flock." This statement is further expanded for 21st-century leaders to be aware that they are shepherds, regardless of specialized calling or

¹ Timothy S. Laniak, *While Shepherds Watch Their Flocks* (China: Everbest Printing Company Ltd., 2007), 231.

gifting. At the same time, whatever strategies leaders bring to the table of ministry, Laniak agrees with the Apostle who said, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). For example, if one is gifted and called to youth ministry, it should be viewed in light of the whole congregation. In addition, some congregations are appointing youth ministers to caring for youth and their families. This specialized ministry model aims to include the whole congregation, "think flock."

This literature review offers ministry leaders an opportunity to consider the emerging picture of 21st-century worship development and to gain the perspective that elders can offer to dynamic worship. Ideally speaking, worship is a place to observe relevant congregational dynamics in motion and in tension. Writing from British Baptist Free Church perspective, Christopher Ellis says, "What Christians believe is embodied in the things they say and do when they gather for worship."² Worship offers ministry leaders a great medium within which to connect resilient faith and rigorous practice in all followers of Jesus.

For Brethren the keys to Christian living is *faith*, or what one understands and believes the Bible says; and *practice*, how one experiences faith devotionally, corporately, and universally. Congregational life finds relevance in the context of worship and in the world beyond meetinghouse walls. By exploring the issues of meaningful worship with aging Brethren, ministry leaders gain a long-term perspective to guide significant congregational life decisions. Senior adults, particularly those of leadership experience, have

² Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 225.

observed the ebb and flow of what inspires and sustains Christians in the long-term. Elders have discovered what brings lasting meaning across several faith generations.

As suggested in an earlier chapter, one Brethren author reassures ministry leaders that quality worship is a good indicator of congregational health. Using the flock ideal, ministry leadership must never overlook one part of the flock to the exclusion or detriment of the whole when developing worship. Granted, this situation creates a tension in the quest for relevance by ministry leaders and the congregation, but that tension can be healthy. Healthy tension holds the potential to revive and rejuvenate an entire congregation. This literature review endeavors to come to terms with what worship becomes in the context of 21st-century Brethren elders.

Dynamic worship seeks to fulfill both the extrinsic expression and intrinsic experience of faith in corporate worship. Outwardly, Christian worship is commonly expressed through prayer, music, and scripture. Beyond these common elements, Free Church ministry leaders seek to enhance or enrich the soul experience through fresh expressions. Styles of worship are problematic for ministry leaders who measure the intrinsic quality of worship by increased participation. Ministry leaders, in either solo or multilevel staff settings, anguish over the risk-resulting outcomes, whether negative or positive. The result is maverick leaders throw caution to the wind and conventionalists stay the course. Extreme approaches like these present impassés faced by 21st-century ministry leaders preparing and leading dynamic worship with integrity. Aging

Christians, along with ministry leaders, are the first to experience the tension.

Literature regarding the development of worship with aging Christians, like other literature on aging, is only recently emerging with significant momentum. Late 20th-century literature on ministry with elders is set in the context of outreach approaches, including social, emotional, physical, and spiritual programs *to* or *for* older adults. Materials offer ministry leaders and volunteer leaders suggestions on ministry development with elders' needs in mind. Ministry leaders, in these resources, tend to initiate and coordinate efforts to meet the needs of older adults reactively, rather than proactively. This style of leadership ignores the Protestant ideal of the priesthood of all believers, which includes all Christians at the table of ministry decisions. Consequently, these leadership materials neglect valuable elder input in the development of congregational programming.

Study fields relevant to this thesis include studies on aging and religion, and on worship development. Present literature on religion and aging includes studies pertaining to the perceptions and attitudes of aging worshipers. Many of the studies are institutionally-based and often include persons in life-crisis circumstances, such as relational, physical, or cognitional decline or loss. To summarize: current aging and religion studies consider the themes of purpose in attendance, a sense of belonging, and influences on participation. These themes help to qualify the extrinsic dynamic of worship to aging Christians.

Literature on the subject of worship development defines the intrinsic value of worship to a community of aging Christians. Development of Christian

worship is determined by the worship tradition of participants. Participants in this present study are part of Free Church Worship tradition. While Free Church worship expression is difficult to define in sequential terms, worshippers find meaningful elements. By marrying aging and religion to worship development, a broader understanding of meaningful worship will sharpen the picture of relevant worship for Brethren ministry leaders with aging Christians.

In order to develop corporate worship with aging Christians, the thesis writer aims to gather input of Church of the Brethren CCRC elders active in corporate worship either in a fellowship or congregational setting. Literature relative to Free Church worship expression, and more specifically of the Believers tradition, will inform a questionnaire surveying the opinions of LVBH elders. Elder input aims to inform perceptive ministry leaders toward development of dynamic corporate worship with aging Christians, by not pitting one worship style against another, but creating something meaningful to the whole “flock.” This review aims to glean pertinent findings from current research and convey ideas, which guide Brethren ministry leaders to revitalizing corporate worship with elders input in mind.

Elder Relevant Worship Development: 21st-Century Literature

In order for ministry leaders to merge the fields of aging, religion, and practical ministry, it is imperative to find someone who can articulate a pastoral perspective in a frame of substantive approaches or guides. Richard Gentzler, of the United Methodist Church, has contributed greatly to Protestant literature on

ministry with aging Christians, and serves as a fitting authority for Christians of Free Church tradition. Gentzler directs 21st-century ministry leaders to consider three guides entrusted to shepherds of God's flock. While Gentzler's strength is senior adult ministry, he thinks "flock" in structuring practical ministry guides. In the program of making disciples of Jesus Christ, leaders must never overlook the common pastoral approaches: *congregational interdependence, intentional religious life, and operational faithful living and service to God*.³

Gentzler's three guides, interestingly enough, are as applicable to senior adult programming as to a whole congregational approach to worship development. Further, these guides are constructive in surveying literature relevant to this thesis-project. Elder-relevant literature will reveal these guides as strong themes pertinent to the late 20th-century ideals set forth by the Church of the Brethren in its *Statement on Aging*.

Congregational Interdependence

Gentzler's first approach directs ministry leaders to consider the interdependence that exists among participants in a congregational setting. This approach is consistent with the Church of the Brethren's *Statement on Aging* which "[E]nvisions the church as a nurturing, supportive community that regards older persons as growing, learning, and contributing members of family, church, and society."⁴ As contributing members, elders are given a voice in

³ Richard H. Gentzler, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century: An Inquiry Approach* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 91-92.

⁴ Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren. *Statement on Aging*. (Elgin, IL: Church of

active congregational life. Brethren additionally, “Call forth the gifts and skills of older persons, enabling their continuing involvement and meaningful participation in the total life of the church and the wider community.”⁵

In light of the Brethren ideal of interdependence set forth by the statement, current literature would support this as a relevant approach in the 21st century. Dosia Carlson describes worship in both private and corporate experiences, from a “flock” perspective:

Coming together for worship with those sharing similar faith commitments can promote feelings of strength and support. As men and women, usually of mixed ages, pray, sing, and confess creed together, a solidarity develops that can enhance not only spiritual but also total well-being.⁶

Interestingly, Carlson’s insight begins with the assumption that elders worship in the context of gender- and age-integrated contexts. Additionally, Carlson’s study eventually supports and expands Gentzler’s guide of congregational interdependence in both Christian and Jewish worship settings.

Dr. Susan McFadden, in one of the most pertinent studies to this thesis, discovers that when CCRC elders participate in on-site worship this interdependence emerges to social roles.⁷ CCRC ministry leaders quickly discover this feature of congregational interdependence. At Lebanon Valley Brethren Home [LVBH], a weekly corps of ten to fifteen chapel volunteers assist others with tasks of transport, hospitality, and technical support. While some

the Brethren General Board, 1985), 1.

⁵ *Statement on Aging*, 3-4.

⁶ Melvin Kimble, Susan H. McFadden, James W. Ellor, and James J. Seeber, *Aging, Spirituality, and Religion: A Handbook* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 235.

⁷ Susan H. McFadden, and Jamie D. Jacobson, “Residents’ Attitudes About On-site Religious Activities: A Comparison of Continuing Care Retirement Communities in Two States,” *Journal Of Religious Gerontology* 15, no. 3 (2003), 71-72.

volunteers assist weekly, others give support once or twice each month totaling a monthly corps of thirty to forty volunteers. In addition, volunteers assist in transport and hospitality tasks for occasional communion and Mass. Roles in the fellowship setting also include greeters or accompanists which may be a continuation of roles crossing over from the congregational worship setting. On the other hand, in the fellowship setting, elders may choose to explore completely new roles in which they never participated in congregational life, outside of worship or study attendance.

One of McFadden's study questions contemplates the reason some elders engage in religious activities: is it due to a crisis in aging or life long participation? McFadden explains that some older adults choose religious activities when seeking purpose in the aging process, termed *gerotranscendence*, defined:

...[O]lder people undergo a qualitative shift in which they increasingly become aware of existential concerns about life's meaning as they experience repeated encounters with mortality, either through the deaths of loved ones or potentially fatal medical crises.⁸

As McFadden suggests, one may choose to be involved in on-site religious activities as a place to process aging crises through the lens of faith. On the other hand, elders may actively participate in religious activities to discover or recover a great reserve of hope to age successfully. Either way, ministry leaders must engage elders in purposeful worship with others in life transition, or crisis.

Two related studies on aging and religion consider the influence other

⁸ McFadden, *Religious Activities*, 63.

people have in motivating lifelong participation in congregational worship. Keep in mind, studies on aging and religion reflect observable data based upon the responses of participants. One study suggests the *sense of belonging* is a catalyst for social ties to a congregation. Neal Krause and Keith M. Wulff observe:

People who have a long history of affiliating with a church are more likely to continue to worship there than individuals who have not been associated with the church for a long time; people who attend church often are more likely to receive support from those who worship there; individuals who receive support from fellow church members are more likely to feel they belong to a congregation; and a strong sense of belonging is associated with greater satisfaction with health.⁹

While Krause and Wulff have difficulty in naming a *sense of belonging* as the catalyst to a worshipper's connection with the congregation, there is empirical evidence for regular worshipers to experience connectedness through mutual acts of support and compassion. Krause and Wulff inform ministry leaders about the importance of faith community and its long-term relational and health effects on individuals.

A second study explores the influence of parents upon on lifelong worshipers. Neal Krause and Christopher G. Ellison advocate parental religious influence as the best preparation for aging: "...[T]he results from the current study suggest that having parents who encouraged them to be religious may also have a positive effect on the quality of life of older people because it may enhance their feelings of self-worth."¹⁰

⁹ Neal Krause and Keith M. Wulff, "Church-Based Social Ties, A Sense of Belonging in a Congregation, and Physical Health Status," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 15, no. 1 (2005), 88.

¹⁰ Neal Krause and Christopher G. Ellison, "Parental Religious Socialization Practices and Self-Esteem in Late Life," *Review of Religious Research* 49, no. 2 (2007), 124.

The study by Krause and Ellison connects some of Laniak's "flock" mentality for ministry leaders to consider the lifelong influence that the practice of religion has generation after generation. Krause and Ellison qualify their results by suggesting it would be interesting to follow this lifelong influence for several generations. This study strengthens the importance of ministry leaders to consider the long-term effects of today's decisions on the congregation to come.

Brethren authors Richard Gardner and Kenneth Shaffer offer a Brethren perspective on interdependent worship:

Worship is central to the life of God's people. From the songs of Miriam and Moses, to the psalms sung in the temple, to the music surrounding God's throne in Revelation, scripture depicts the community of faith as a worshiping community. To put it another way: To know God is to worship God.¹¹

The vision of interdependency includes not only the relationship with other Christians, but also the relationship with God. As a denomination of German roots, the Brethren speak of this interdependence as *Gemeinschaft*, or "the quality of commonality that makes a *Gemeinde* [collective body] truly a community."¹²

Gentzler's guide of congregational interdependence, in light of supportive literature, reveals to ministry leaders that not only is age-integrated congregational life important now, but serves to prepare future generations for meaningful experiences of worship in the years to come. Elders who actively

¹¹ Richard B. Gardner and Kenneth M. Shaffer, *Let Our Joys Be Known* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1998), 33.

¹² "Gemeinde, Gemeinschaft." *The Brethren Encyclopedia* (Philadelphia, PA: The Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., Volume 1, 1983), 534.

participate in corporate worship serve as a legitimate population to offer ministry leaders direction in worship development. Today's ministry leaders must consider congregational interdependence as it relates to the quality of congregational life shaped for tomorrow.

Intentional Religious Life

Gentzler's next approach directs ministry leaders to be intentional about religious life for elders entrusted to them. This approach is consistent with the Brethren's *Statement on Aging* which encourages ministry leaders to be 'purposeful' or intentional about including aging Brethren in congregational life. Regardless of the setting, whether congregational or fellowship, it is important for ministry leaders to take intentional steps to provide meaningful worship experiences. When personal crisis leads one to a long-term care setting, ministry leaders are well-advised to initiate spiritual approaches to equip elders with the means to maintain religious practice, personally and corporately.

One may wonder how important faith is to someone in a long-term care setting, to which a CCRC Wisconsin male elder respondent answers:

I feel that unless an individual has a strong religious faith, they're not going to like it here. Because you have an exposure to death far more than you do living off in a residential setting....[As a CCRC elder] You see a sequence of people coming in, and living in independent living, and moving to assisted living, then to the health center, and on out. And if you don't have a strong faith, it scares you.¹³

Dr. McFadden and co-author Jamison interviewed twelve elders living in CCRCs, six in Wisconsin and six in Florida. The study explores the importance of on-site

¹³ McFadden, *Religious Activities*, 63.

religious activities to elders in a continuum of care. McFadden discovered two pertinent observations: "[O]n-site religious services and activities are important to some individuals, and elders appreciate the ecumenical nature of the programs."¹⁴ The first of these observations connects to intentional religious life or activities, while the second characterizes operational faith and practice. For elders who value on-site religious services, these activities help as one strives to maintain a life rhythm regardless of whether they live in a long-term care setting or not.

Harold Koenig writes that elders, particularly those in life crisis, need to engage in religious activities or behaviors:

Elders need the opportunity to participate in activities such as prayer, scripture reading, and worship [private and communal]. They need the time to pray and sometimes, a person to pray with. They need time to visit with their clergy-person or other church members.¹⁵

In Koenig's experience, ministry leaders are partners in equipping and engaging elders in both individual and corporate worship. Engagement, as mentioned earlier, must be proactive, rather than reactive. Further, Koenig writes that elders need validation and support of religious behaviors:

They [elders in crisis] need people in their environment to recognize, support, validate, and encourage such behaviors [if the elder finds them useful], not ignore, ridicule, or devalue them. When a health professional supports and validates the use of religion as an important and powerful coping mechanism, he or she may enhance religion's effectiveness and capacity for reducing stress.¹⁶

It is interesting that Koenig qualifies any health professional with the power to

¹⁴ McFadden, *Religious Activities*, 74.

¹⁵ Harold Koenig, *Aging and God* (Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, Inc. 1994), 287.

¹⁶ Koenig, *Aging and God*, 287.

validate and support elders to engage in meaningful worship. Attentive ministry leaders recognize the importance of being active partners in engaging elders in worship.

Worship and study activities are important to help CCRC elders keep track of time in a week. Weekly worship for elders of a CCRC, like LVBH, is consistently led by a different community congregation each week. In addition to worship, spiritual enrichment activities at LVBH include Bible Study, small devotional groups, and Sunday School. While these do not constitute the sum total of religious programming for the week, these spiritual enrichment activities are part of the weekly rhythm aimed to help elders either maintain or enhance spiritual life. Just as one season anticipates another so the predictable rhythms of worship and study activities serve as a stabilizing force for persons living in long-term care.

As advocates for elder inclusion in worship, Susan Pendleton Jones and L. Gregory Jones instruct ministry leaders to create initiatives which will provide meaningful worship for all worship participants. For example, during their firstborn's baptism, the Joneses observed the meaningful response of Greg's great-aunt Ruth to music. Despite her initial confusion and inappropriateness, symptomatic of Alzheimer's disease, she engaged in the celebration.¹⁷ Writing on corporate worship, the Joneses observe,

[E]cclesially, we discover authentically Christian community precisely as we practice worship in ways that develop habits of life, thought, and interaction that school us to discover one another's

¹⁷ Stanley Hauerwas, Carole Bailey Stoneking, Keith G. Meador, and David Cloutier, editors. *Growing Old in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2003), 201.

identities as creatures of a gracious and holy God who promises to recreate our lives in God's eternal kingdom. We do so in worship, and in giving and receiving care and friendship across the generations; those who are infirm or cognitively impaired are as important in the ways they receive care and friendship as are those who offer it.¹⁸

This observation prompts ministry leaders to recall the importance of corporate worship to dynamic spiritual experience for all participants. Ministry leaders discover that intentional or purposeful approaches will result in a variety of experiences. Community worship has the potential to powerfully affect elders and others in serendipitous ways.

Richard Gentzler integrates perspectives of aging and religion into the realm of practical ministry by emphasizing the role aging Christians have in the 21st-century church. Intentional ministry with aging Christians faces congregational barriers or hurdles including a lack of purpose, priority, leadership, influence, resources, accessibility, and even little support from older adults.¹⁹ Despite these hindrances, Gentzler calls the church to ministry with aging Christians as essential to all-inclusive congregation life. "[Gentzler] sees older adults as active participants in contributing to the church's life and mission and in meeting the spiritual needs of its members."²⁰ For ministry leaders to take such an approach not only validates intentional participation, but creates enthusiasm to invite others to meaningful community experience.

Gentzler's guide of intentional religious life, in light of supportive literature, reveals that ministry leaders have the role and responsibility to be

¹⁸ Hauerwas, *Growing Old in Christ*, 197.

¹⁹ Gentzler, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century*, 94-95.

²⁰ Gentzler, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century*, 92.

catalysts to engage elders in meaningful worship to maintain or enhance spiritual life. Even from the perspective of a health care professional like Harold Koenig, it is important for ministry leaders to encourage active engagement in religious activities such as worship. For Brethren ministry leaders, intentional religious life encourages elders to explore what is valuable in active spirituality. In the 21st-century, ministry leaders have a plethora of worship activities and styles to engage elders in meaningful corporate worship.

Operational Faith and Practice

Finally, Gentzler directs ministry leaders to develop operational faith and practice with elder Christians. Worship development, in the Free Church tradition, endeavors to engage a congregation in expressing faith through practice. For Brethren, faith and practice are key components to the Christian life personally and corporately. Brethren authors Richard Gardner and Kenneth Shaffer qualify worship as the path through which operative faith and practice begin:

Worship is linked to obedience. Again and again in the biblical story, the prophets remind the people: It is not sufficient to serve God in the temple. Like a seamless garment, the service to God that begins in worship must continue in the day-to-day conduct of our lives....[W]e must be doers of the word and not hearers only.²¹

While a sequential liturgy eludes Christians of Free Church tradition, meaningful liturgy is experienced by being clothed in the seamless garment of faith and practice. Free Church worship literature on theology and history is the best potential source for finding a key to unlock operational faith and practice for

²¹ Gardner, *Let Our Joys Be Known*, 34.

Brethren and other Free Church congregations.

In order to join the aforementioned aging and religion literature to worship vitality, attention must be given to the form or style by which worship will be developed. From the Free Church worship perspective, flexibility is offered to ministry leaders of this tradition to develop a worship experience which meets the religious needs of many people. The common denominators of scripture, prayer, and singing are the most basic components or activities of meaningful corporate worship. On the subject of practical ministry approaches in the setting of worship, Dosia Carlson suggests:

Depending on the particular tradition, there is usually a combination of adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and dedication. Because expressions of the Jewish and Christian faith are based on sacred writings, most worship times incorporate readings from Holy Scripture. Addressing God through prayers is also a basic ingredient in worship. The singing of hymns is another bonding element in worship. Frail elderly persons unable to attend church or synagogue services often comment that they particularly miss the hymn singing.²²

Ministry leaders, with a general knowledge of worship planning, often reactively develop what they believe will either stir the hearts of elder worshipers for good, and not for ill. For leadership to assume what stirs worshipers hearts may result in a meager attempt at worship that satisfies neither the elders nor the ministry leader. When it comes to the religious needs of CCRC residents, it is important to understand the manner of worship which is most meaningful to elders. One study speaks to this issue:

Nursing home residents in one study were asked to respond to the question, "What do you want the staff to know about your spiritual

²² Kimble, *Aging, Spirituality, and Religion*, 234-235.

needs?" Their strongest reply was in wanting an opportunity for liturgical worship in their own denomination, especially on Sunday. This finding implies the importance of helping people worship in the language and setting most familiar to them.²³

Ministry leaders must aim at giving elders a voice with which to worship, rather than aim at finding a voice by which to minister to the people.

The context for this thesis-project is a Church of the Brethren CCRC that includes elders familiar with traditional Free Church worship manner. Carl D. Bowman's sociological study differentiates the variety of 21st-century worship styles practiced among the Brethren. Bowman stylistically characterizes *contemporary worship* as either praise or performance, and *traditional worship* as conventional or confessional.²⁴ Bowman's study demonstrates that many senior adult Brethren gravitate primarily toward one of the two traditional forms of worship. The study is groundbreaking for Brethren ministry leaders who desire to develop intentional "flock" strategies with senior adults since many participants were greater than 60 years old.

Mid-twentieth century author, John Skoglund reminds readers of the historical roots of Free Church worship,

As the congregationally-oriented free churches find their historical roots in the Reformation and especially in John Calvin, so their [worship] principles in large measure go back to the Geneva Reformer's attempt to bring into the Christian community of his day the life and thought of the New Testament.²⁵

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, in the face of monumental changes in worship,

²³ J. M. Thibault, J. W. Ellor, and F. E. Netting, "A Conceptual Framework for Assessing the Spiritual Functioning and Fulfillment of Older Adults in Long-term Care Settings," *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 7, no. 4 (1991), 29-43.

²⁴ Carl Desportes Bowman, *Portrait of a People: The Church of the Brethren at 300* (Elgin: Brethren Press, 2008), 58-59.

²⁵ John E. Skoglund, *Worship in the Free Churches* (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1965), 45.

there was a move to characterize Christian worship in many formal and informal traditions of practice. Lay participation in the development of church programming is not a new idea to Free Church Worship tradition. Skoglund describes it further:

The responsibility for the ordering of public worship lies with the congregation. The congregation is to seek that liturgy or form of worship which most fittingly and adequately expresses the living Word and the people's response to that Word....The traditional Christian liturgies, as well as contemporary experiments in new forms, provide rich resources for free-church liturgical development.²⁶

The contemporary worship experiments of Skoglund's time, "Jazz and Folk Masses," as well as the development of television in mid-20th-century America began to affect local worship as much as revivals and Chautauqua did in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.²⁷ Such progressive ideas as worship style and technology began to affect both non-liturgical and liturgical congregational worship by mid-20th century. From this perspective, Skoglund warns ministry leaders of the importance of thoughtful worship preparation: "Careless and undisciplined worship is an offense to God and may be the means of destroying rather than up-building the faith of his people."²⁸ Skoglund warns attentive ministry leaders of the spiritual threat to the trust of the people in relation to God.

In the 21st century, Free Church worship tradition has much to offer to the development of corporate worship in either the congregational or fellowship

²⁶ Skoglund, *Worship in the Free Churches*, 67-68.

²⁷ Skoglund, *Worship in the Free Churches*, 13-18.

²⁸ Skoglund, *Worship in the Free Churches*, 65.

setting. Two books on the topic of Free Church worship offer valuable information on this subject, one from British Baptist historical perspective, and the other from American Free Churches of the Believers tradition. The British book approaches Free Church worship from a conventional perspective, and the other from a progressive theological perspective. The British volume offers a rich trove of theological and historical directives in preparing worship in the Free Church tradition.

In a book by Graydon Snyder and Doreen M. McFarlane, Snyder contends that contextualizing worship involves ministry leaders in dialogue with congregational members. From a progressive perspective, Snyder and McFarlane succinctly describe the process associated with American Free Church worship development: “The term “liturgy” means simply a work or a service. So we call the Sunday morning event a *Dienst* or a Service...The presentation of the text [scripture] to an inspired congregation will result in action... The ultimate goal of worship is service to God and God’s reign.”²⁹

Ministry leaders admit that this ideal of worship development is just that: ideal. For busy ministry leaders, given the pressure of pressing weekly tasks, the ideal is neither practical, nor a wise investment of time. Yet, the ideal is important theoretically. Broadly speaking, Snyder and McFarlane write, “The entire service of worship is designed, of course, to bring people from their individualism into a transcendent community of faith. Certain elements in

²⁹ Graydon F. Snyder and Doreen M. McFarlane, *The People Are Holy: The History and Theology of Free Church Worship* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 112.

particular, however, create community.”³⁰ Consistent with what Snyder and McFarlane suggest, development of worship is designed not for one but for the entire congregation. Brethren ministry leaders, in the context of operational faith and practice, will make community-building a priority.

One American Free Church, including the Brethren, finds a traditionalist theological home in what is termed the Believers Church. Barry Callen says the Believers Church designation includes Protestant Christian denominations which emphasize “seekers making the choice to become believers.”³¹ While Snyder and McFarlane serve as an American progressive voice, Callen serves as a conventional voice for Believers Church-oriented Brethren. Callen describes the roots of operational faith and practice of the Church of the Brethren:

For Alexander Mack [organizer of the Church of the Brethren], inward devotion to the Christ of faith and outward obedience to the Jesus of history were equal necessities. For instance, full obedience to the ordinances believed to have been instituted by Jesus requires the functioning reality of communities of faith.³²

Mack’s denominational descendants are found among the denominations of the Church of the Brethren, the Brethren Church, the Fellowship of Grace Brethren, the Dunkard Brethren, and Old Order Baptist Brethren. While each is unique in the way faith is expressed, all find operational faith and practice to be central to congregational worship life.

British author Christopher Ellis approaches the subject of Free Church worship development not by identifying a sequence of worship activities, but by

³⁰ Snyder, *The People Are Holy*, 111.

³¹ Barry L. Callen, *Radical Christianity: The Believers Church Tradition in Christianity’s History and Future* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1999), 14.

³² Callen, *Radical Christianity*, 120.

identifying theological values that influence faith and guide practice. "The theology in this worship is not so much found in the sequencing of the liturgical units, as in the values which influence the *content* of those units, and the *way* in which they are performed."³³ In suggesting the development or order of worship, Ellis sketches the components of order for worship and gives attention to what makes worship meaningful and valuable. "These concerns, or values, are the undergirding principles which shape worship. They represent an *ordo*, a pattern in worship which expresses something fundamental about the patterns of faith of the community."³⁴

Ellis names four values which direct Free Worship development: *Attention to Scripture, Devotion, Church as Community, and Concern for the Kingdom*.³⁵ Ellis describes Scripture as the framework within which one bases faith and practice. Devotion suggests the vertical relationship the Christian has with God. Church as community describes the horizontal relationship the Christian has with other Christians. Concern for the Kingdom contextualizes Christian faith and practice in present and future contexts. Ellis compares how Scripture, devotion, and Church as community are primary elements of Roman Catholic and Protestant worship contexts.³⁶ Thus, Free Church worship is primarily ecumenical in scope.

Ecumenism reflects Dr. Susan McFadden's study, where many Protestant Christian participants gravitated toward services that were ecumenical in

³³ Ellis, *Gathering*, 226.

³⁴ Ellis, *Gathering*, 226.

³⁵ Ellis, *Gathering*, 240-244.

³⁶ Ellis, *Gathering*, 227-228.

nature.³⁷ For LVBH Brethren elders of Free Church worship tradition, there appears to be an appreciation for a variety of traditional worship expressions. For LVBH Christian elders of more formal worship traditions, willing participants appear to discover something spiritually meaningful in less formal offerings. For example, most community congregations which lead worship at LVBH provide accompanied congregational singing, but occasionally a congregation will lead unaccompanied congregational singing.

Ellis's values found in Free Church worship are immensely helpful in constructing a context within which to discern meaningful worship for Brethren, regardless of age. To this end then, the dialogue of pertinent literature informs Brethren ministry leaders in developing meaningful worship consistent with Christian tradition at large.

In light of supportive literature, Gentzler's guide of operational faith and practice reveals to ministry leaders that Free Church worship tradition offers valuable direction for developing corporate worship which elders value. For Brethren ministry leaders, congregational interdependence in the context of intentional corporate worship life, demonstrates faith and practice in tension and motion. Ministry leaders of the 21st century must consider operational faith and practice, to maintain or enhance worship with all God's children.

Summary

Gentzler's three guides inform ministry leaders how to develop meaningful worship in light of current studies on aging and religion. CCRC

³⁷ McFadden, *Religious Activities*, 72.

communities, like LVBH, serve as valuable places where people share living and worship with each other. Those who live in a CCRC, whether by choice or crisis, discover a common spiritual bond with each other in corporate worship. Within this bond, elders offer ministry leaders lifelong learning examples of healthy congregational life together.

Important points of this review emphasize Gentzler's guides of congregational interdependence, intentional religious life, and operational faith and practice. Elders who actively participate in corporate worship serve as a reasonable population to offer ministry leaders direction in worship development. Ministry leaders are well-advised to initiate spiritual approaches that equip elders with the means to maintain or enhance spiritual life through familiar religious practice. Ministry leaders must aim at giving elders a voice with which to worship, rather than at finding a voice by which to minister to the people. Brethren ministry leaders, in the context of operational faith and practice, will make community-building a priority. Together, these findings serve to keep ministry leaders on course in the task of serving the flock to which they have been entrusted.

Spiritual enrichment opportunities in CCRCs allow ministry leaders an opportunity to experience mutual ministry with elders. Such settings can inspire ministry leaders to consider ministry leadership from a "flock" mentality. Quite possibly such a setting may enhance community life, and enhance leadership skills for generations to come.

IV. PROJECT DESIGN

What makes worship meaningful to elder Church of the Brethren worshipers? For ministry leaders who live in a world void of senior adults, there is an assumption that elder perceptions of worship bear little relevance to congregational life in the 21st century. As innocuous as the thought appears, ministry leaders must know that as 21st-century elder Brethren change so will their expectations for congregational worship. Consequently, emerging expectations will cause ministry leaders to consider relevant approaches rooted in what Brethren worship has meant in the past, what is emerging today, and what will be expected tomorrow.

Senior adult Brethren are never at a loss to describe meaningful worship. What do elder Brethren have instructive for 21st-century ministry leaders? Ministry leaders must never take for granted elder expectations when developing corporate worship. Beyond years of life, elder Brethren offer a comprehensive view of the ebb and flow of influence on church worship through the years. Elder Brethren offer insights on what has endured the test of time, and what is a passing innovation. This thesis-project aims to gather insights of active, observant, thoughtful elder Brethren worshipers toward developing meaningful, dynamic worship.

The project design for this thesis-project has been informed by a theological, theoretical, and practical literature review. The thesis-study instrument, a survey questionnaire, will be administered, summarized, reported, and subsequently qualified by elder focus groups. The results of this

questionnaire will provide relevant feedback regarding worship involvement, valued worship activities, and meaningful faith and practice. Brethren author Carl D. Bowman's 2006 Membership Profile¹ study has proven resourceful in the development of this thesis-study instrument. The result of this present inquiry aims to represent traditional worship preferences of active, observant, thoughtful Brethren elder worshipers. Ministry leaders will find valuable data engaging the entire congregation in meaningful, dynamic worship.

Methods and Procedures

This research thesis-project design will use a two-part method to gather both quantifying data and qualifying commentary for the data. First, the quantifying procedure involves the questionnaire to be completed by participants in this survey. Participants will be instructed to gather in a large group meeting space to receive both written and verbal instruction on study participation, and a copy of the questionnaire. The questionnaire focuses on personal opinions regarding extrinsic and intrinsic outcomes of corporate worship. There are few if any possible personal risks to those participating in this study. This part of the study requires no need for identifiable personal data that would compromise personal, health care, or financial privacy information. There are no assignments or groupings of participants, and none will receive compensation for participation.

¹ Carl Desportes Bowman, *Portrait of A People* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 2008). Bowman's 2008 study, as opposed to the 1995 study, will be cited throughout this chapter.

Logistically speaking, visual perusal of the questionnaire instrument² demonstrates an awareness of sight impairment for some elders. With this in mind, the questionnaire uses Cambria bold font with 14-point size for text presentation. Additionally, the statement and listing tables are framed to aid in visual clarity for response spaces. At Dr. Bryan Auday's suggestion,³ the four pages of the questionnaire will appear on one side of the page rather than on each side to present a visually appealing instrument.

The Researcher will appoint a third person, a Monitor, to oversee implementation of the questionnaire. A survey session will be scheduled and publicized by mutual agreement of the Researcher and Monitor. Detailing the setting and publicity are the responsibility of the Researcher. Meeting place details include: room reservation, request for tables and chairs, appointment of a small table as the Monitor's desk, and preparation of directional signs to the room. Supplies for the Monitor include 50 copies of the questionnaire, 50-75 pens, a clipboard, sign up sheet for focus groups, and a box in which participants will place completed questionnaires. The focus group sign up sheet includes space for name, telephone number, and a selection of appointed dates--including a no-preference choice--from which willing participants can choose.

In preparation to administer the questionnaire, a public announcement of the survey will be publicized to potential participants through Lebanon Valley Brethren Home [LVBH] campus cable channel TV 3 and bulletin boards.

² The study instrument titled, "Worship Development Questionnaire," is found in Appendix A of this document pages 110-113.

³ Dr. Bryan Auday, Personal telephone conversation and e-mail correspondence, Gordon College, November 8, 2010.

Information on the announcement will include the date, place, and time, as well as contact information for the facilitating Researcher. An announcement example: Do you have an opinion about congregational worship? "Church of the Brethren resident elders are invited to participate in a survey conducted on January 28 at 2:00 PM in the Community Center Board Room."

All potential survey participants will be active Church of the Brethren members of the Independent or Residential Living Community of LVBH. Participants are those who have designated a pastoral care contact or membership in a Church of the Brethren and who choose to fill out a survey questionnaire. Potentially greater than 100 residential or independent living level elders may voluntarily participate in the questionnaire study. The anticipated participation number is 30 to 40 people. A participation number in this range would serve as a strong response rate.

At the appointed time, the Monitor will distribute questionnaires after all participants arrive and are seated. Before participants receive the four-page questionnaire, the Monitor will thank respondents for their participation and instruct that no name should be written on any page of the questionnaire. Participants should read the instructions to each section and mark the appropriate response in the space provided. At the bottom of pages 2, 3, and 4 space is available for participants to write additional comments relevant to the topic.

To insure anonymity, questionnaire participants are instructed in the header of each page not to write a name anywhere on the questionnaire. No

identifiable information is asked on the questionnaire. Instruction at the bottom of the page directs participants to place completed questionnaires in a box at the Monitor's desk. The Monitor's desk will be separate from the tables used for receiving questionnaires. The total time needed for participants may total 30 minutes, which includes distribution of questionnaires, verbal explanation of the process, fielding questions, and then completion and submission of forms.

A sign up sheet will be placed on the Monitor's desk for anyone who would choose to participate in a follow-up discussion or focus group. The Monitor will explain that the results of the questionnaire will be summarized and reported at that session. More importantly, the focus group will offer opinions of the results in order to help the Researcher understand conclusions that reflect genuine perceptions. The Monitor will emphasize the importance of participation in discussion groups to provide accurate conclusions.

When all participants have completed the questionnaire, the Monitor will place the clipboard with sign up sheet, and pens in the Monitor's box. The Monitor will place all completed questionnaires in one large envelope, and all uncompleted questionnaires in another large envelope which, together with the other contents of the Monitor's box, will be delivered to and secured in the Administrative Conference Room where four tellers will tabulate the results. Sheets with written responses will be sorted by tellers and given to the Administrative receptionist for immediate transcription into a password protected computer document. The tallied questionnaires will be summarized

by the tellers for transcription into a password protected computer document. Questionnaire hardcopies will remain secured in a locked file in the Chaplain's Office and subsequently destroyed when the summation and thesis-project are complete.

Subsequent to conducting the thesis-study instrument, focus groups will meet to discuss and qualify data from the questionnaire. The first 10 to 14 people to sign up will be selected to participate in one of two focus group sessions. Follow up contact with focus group volunteers will confirm involvement and schedule a time. There will be no assignments or groupings of participants, and none will receive compensation for participation in this portion either. The purpose of this discussion is to share the results of the worship development questionnaire, seek responses to the results, and to qualify what the results reflect for ministry leaders in the development of dynamic worship. Dynamic worship includes both the outward expression or activities of worship, and the inward experience or the meaningful results of worship.

Focus group members will gather for the scheduled discussion session with the Researcher and the Recorder. The discussion or focus group is a setting where a standard of confidentiality is of utmost importance to those who attend and participate. A signed written consent form will allow all focus group participants to give permission to log verbal responses gathered during the session. All means, to the extent permitted by law, will be used to insure anonymity and privacy for those who participate in the discussion. Signed statements by elders, the Recorder, and the Researcher will establish trust in

keeping all information private to insure candid discussion.

Participants are asked to honor this trust in order to maintain mutual integrity. During the discussion time, the Recorder will log each response, read the response back to the respondent, and offer the respondent freedom to change, correct, or withdraw the response from the record. Each participant will be given an opportunity to respond--or pass on responding--to each of the reflections without interruption. Participants will be advised that in the event of any report or publication based on this study, no identity will be disclosed. Results will be reported in a summarized manner in such a way that no participant can be identified.

The substance of the focus group will be to reflect on worship attendance, worship participation, preferred traditional worship activities, and qualifying meaningful worship. Since the study is focused upon informing ministry leaders, focus group members will be asked, by way of conclusion, if there is anything else ministry leaders should know about meaningful worship. Focus group discussions will serve to qualify the resulting data of the questionnaire from the perspective of those who participated.

After the focus group meetings are completed, the Researcher will compile and summarize the information gathered at the sessions. A full report will be prepared to be included in chapter V of the thesis-project. These focus group conclusions will help to qualify the input of questionnaire respondents, and thus aim at presenting the information with the highest integrity. Subsequently, these conclusions will serve as credible data for those who seek to

further the study of worship development regardless of the population surveyed.

An Instrument to Give Voice

A valid study instrument should give participants a voice with which to participate either through discussion, or marked questionnaire response. The thesis-study instrument determines the credibility of respondents as instructive informants. In process-fashion, the study instrument gives participants opportunity to indicate a breadth of preferences and opinions through use of a Likert Scale.⁴ The Likert Scale method allows respondents to offer extreme positive, negative, or neutral answers to each question. Additionally, respondents who choose to do so will have opportunity to write additional comments at the bottom of pages 2, 3, and 4 of the questionnaire.

Resources used to direct the study instrument includes material from both Church of the Brethren and Free Church writings. In dialogue with studies by Brethren authors Carl D. Bowman and Donald R. Fitzkee,⁵ this thesis-project questionnaire seeks to contextualize extrinsic and intrinsic dynamics of worship for Church of the Brethren senior adults. Each of these Brethren authors offer important directives in understanding what defines the Brethren, and the way mainstream Christianity has influenced both formal and informal corporate worship. Fitzkee's study offers 20th century worship changes, while Bowman's

⁴ A Likert Scale is a research method by which survey respondents are given five choices from which to answer a statement or comment. For example, the questionnaire for this thesis-project instrument uses the following choices for one section: weekly, monthly, twice annually, annually, and never. A Likert Scale always offers respondents a neutral option. Modifications of this research method offer either greater or fewer than five choices.

⁵ Donald R. Fitzkee, *Moving Toward the Mainstream* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1995).

study contextualizes early 21st century trends among the Brethren.

Free Church tradition writings help discern how Brethren and other Christians have been influenced in both extrinsic and intrinsic dynamics of worship. The studies of Christopher Ellis,⁶ and Barry Callen,⁷ in dialogue with this thesis-project instrument seek to discern how 21st-century Brethren elders have been influenced by either formal or informal worship orientations. Christopher Ellis offers important directives describing common worship values, rather than standard sequential orders or worship, that guide Free Church worship development. Barry Callen of Believers Church perspective, a type of Free Church tradition related to the Church of the Brethren articulates ideals related to explaining worship orientation and values. Worship values, ideals, and influences in dialogue with one another, aim to grasp meaningful traditional faith and practice among the Brethren

In consultation with Dr. Bryan Auday,⁸ the study instrument⁹ asks LVBH senior adults to indicate participation and express opinions on traditional corporate worship. Participant responses will help ministry leaders to contemplate and create worship in light of senior adult input. While the first section of the study instrument demonstrates activity in worship, the second and third sections picture how formal and informal worship styles influence preferred extrinsic and intrinsic experience.

⁶ Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004).

⁷ Barry L. Callen, *Radical Christianity: The Believers Church Tradition in Christianity's History and Future* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1999).

⁸ Dr. Bryan Auday, Personal telephone conversation and e-mail correspondence, Gordon College, November 8, 2010.

⁹ See Appendix A.

The threefold study instrument seeks to explore preferences regarding elder worship participation, worship related activities, and valuable experiences in worship. The first questionnaire section seeks responses regarding frequency in corporate worship participation. The second questionnaire section asks the degree to which elders value extrinsic worship activities, such as congregational singing, prayers, and scripture reading. Worship activities listed in this part of the questionnaire aim to discern preferred common, conventional, or confessional type worship activities. The final questionnaire section inquires about the degree to which elders agree or disagree with a variety of intrinsic outcomes in worship through the lens of either conventional or confessional type orientation. The statements included in the questionnaire seek to define rather than differentiate Brethren congregational worship as preferred by elder Brethren.

Corporate Worship Participation

Brethren of American Free Church tradition, termed Believers tradition, cherish the privilege of gathering. Barry Callen describes how proponents of Believers tradition envision gathering to demonstrate what Gentzler calls *congregational interdependence*:¹⁰

The distinctive theological vision of this [Believers] tradition [finds] roots in biblical revelation and in the centrality of serious discipleship to be realized in covenant community, not in the settledness of church structures, traditions, or systems of theology.¹¹

¹⁰ Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century: An Inquiry Approach* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 91.

¹¹ Callen, *Radical Christianity*, 83.

Through the vision of covenant community, believers are in relationship for the common good of all, or mutual enrichment. One way to experience and express this is to take every opportunity to meet together with others of faith. Active participation in congregational life, especially corporate worship, is important to mutual enrichment.

Worship participation, the first study instrument section,¹² gathers data relative to the frequency with which persons attend or participate in worship. Elders who actively participate in corporate worship serve as a logical choice to offer ministry leaders direction in worship development. Frequency of participation informs ministry leaders that the opinions expressed in the questionnaire are given by those who not only value, but actively participate in corporate worship. Variety of involvement, such as worship leadership and congregational singing, informs ministry leaders that the opinions expressed in the questionnaire are given by those who actively participate in settings together with Sunday morning preaching services. Establishing involvement, by frequency and variety, strengthens the base of participant responses regarding Gentzler's principle of congregational interdependence.

Portrait of a People records the results of a survey involving 1,826 Church of the Brethren respondents from 106 congregations, and Carl Bowman's commentary on the results.¹³ Results of Bowman's questionnaire section titled, "Religious Activities and Congregational Life" are germane to this thesis-project

¹² See Appendix A, 110.

¹³ Bowman, *Portrait*, viii.

by portraying statistics relevant to attendance frequency¹⁴ and communion preferences¹⁵. Using modified Likert Scales, Bowman asks respondents about attendance frequency and communion preference.

Congregational interdependence, as indicated by the frequency with which one participates in worship, establishes the breadth of settings in which one is active. Frequency in participation and leadership demonstrates for observers the significance of congregational worship in the life of an elder. Historically, Brethren were exclusive in corporate worship forbidding members to worship with non-Brethren Christians. Further, Brethren of the past endorsed participation in Love Feast, as opposed to bread and cup communion, as the exclusive manner of participation. Twenty-first century Brethren commonly participate in ecumenical worship and include bread and cup communion in addition to Love Feast observance. The instrument statements regarding Love Feast, bread and cup communion, and worship with other Protestant Christians seeks to discern how conventional styles of worship have influenced Brethren. Participation in congregational singing indicates how one values a long-held confessional tradition among Brethren, particularly in Eastern Pennsylvania.

Don Fitzkee tracks changes among the Brethren of Eastern Pennsylvania as experienced in the 20th century. Observable evidence of the influence of Protestant formal worship cited by Fitzkee includes the changes in the setting and style of worship:

¹⁴ Bowman, *Portrait*, 114.

¹⁵ Bowman, *Portrait*, 116.

Acolytes and offerings, preludes and postludes, organs and robed choirs, gradually found their way into Brethren worship, while traditional practices such as kneeling for prayer and *a cappella* congregational singing faded. Even the love feast...dwindled in significance [with the introduction of bread and cup communion]. By the 1990s, the setting and style of Brethren worship communicated mainstream Protestant commitments.¹⁶

Parenthetically, Fitzkee reports in Table 10.3 the percentage [based on 66 respondents] of congregations among which formal worship practices are common: benedictions [100 percent]; offerings [98 percent]; special music [91 percent]; bread and cup communion [65 percent]; *a cappella* singing [21 percent]; and kneeling for prayer [12 percent].¹⁷

This thesis-project study instrument section titled, "Worship Participation," seeks to discover how Brethren elders live in covenant community through active mutual enrichment. The responses of elders will portray the frequency of involvement in various worship activity aimed at mutual enrichment. Subsequently, ministry leaders will gather practical guidance regarding congregational interdependence articulated by elder Brethren.

Corporate Extrinsic Worship

The thesis-project questionnaire section titled, "Worship Activities," seeks elder responses relating to extrinsic worship practice, such as congregational singing, prayers, and scripture reading. Worship activities listed in this part of the questionnaire will be aimed at discerning preferred common,

¹⁶ Fitzkee, *Mainstream*, 254.

¹⁷ Fitzkee, *Mainstream*, 284.

conventional, or confessional worship styles in order to define which style of worship elder Brethren find meaningful. Dale Brown suggests Brethren not oversimplify perceptions of casual styles of worship in the Church of the Brethren:

Because of [their] warm informality and the “low church” nature of some of the Sunday services, the impression has often been given that the Church of the Brethren is not very liturgical. A closer examination ... reveal[s] a rich worship tradition with a unifying dynamic in the midst of a variety of [worship] forms.¹⁸

Ministry leaders are well-advised to initiate spiritual approaches that equip elders with intentional means to maintain or enhance faith through familiar religious practice, otherwise called worship activities. In his study on Brethren worship, Kenneth I. Morse considers worship as communication in various forms. Morse discusses the importance of language and use of language in worship through sermon, prayers, and scripture reading. Morse writes,

...[W]e are eager for another kind of worship – “in spirit and in truth,” as Jesus said - which relates to all of life, the kind of worship that provides an opportunity for meeting, for us to come face to face with God and with our brothers and sisters. So we have a right to ask of language that it really aid our communication with God and with one another.¹⁹

Formal and informal traditional worship activities are best identified, in light of Morse’s instruction, by what worshipers define as either prepared or spontaneous language. Worship activities are the means by which to orient and aid effective communication with God and one another.

Carl D. Bowman’s survey section titled, “Religious Activities and

¹⁸ Donald F. Durnbaugh, *Church of the Brethren Yesterday and Today* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1986), 62.

¹⁹ Kenneth I. Morse, *Move In Our Midst* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1977), 83.

Congregational Life” intersects with this thesis-project portraying statistics relevant to worship activity.²⁰ The worship activity preferences portion of Bowman’s study, including stylistic nuances from traditional and contemporary worship models, are based upon a true Likert scale.²¹ This portion of Bowman’s study helps to inform Brethren ministry leaders regarding the issues of what Gentzler terms *intentional religious life*.²²

Bowman’s commentary on Brethren perceptions of worship styles includes both traditional and contemporary forms.²³ This thesis-project instrument seeks to explore elder Brethren opinions on conventional [formal] and confessional [informal] types of traditional worship only; contemporary styles are not included. By exploring these traditional types, ministry leaders may discern elder preference for either a formal or informal worship style. Bowman concludes, “...[M]y best estimate is that about 16 percent of today’s Brethren have a preference for traditional, confessional services, while twice as many (32 percent) prefer a less emotional traditional service, which I have called conventional.”²⁴

Relevant to a senior adult worship style preference, one would assume that elders desire traditional worship forms over any contemporary. But Figure 6.4 of Bowman’s text presents a bar graph depicting worship style preference percentages by age group including senior adults. This graph reflects a strong preference for conventional [traditional] worship and moderate preference for

²⁰ Bowman, *Portrait*, 114.

²¹ Bowman, *Portrait*, 14, 16.

²² Gentzler, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century*, 91.

²³ Bowman, *Portrait*, 58-59.

²⁴ Bowman, *Portrait*, 59.

praise [contemporary] worship among those greater than 65 years old.²⁵

“Worship Activities,”²⁶ seeks to gather responses indicating the degree to which persons value particular traditional worship activities. Conventional worship activities include prepared resources such as a call to worship, unison prayer, responsive reading, and even planned silent prayer. All these have a quality of formality. Additionally, rehearsed choir anthems, and even standing for prayer add a polished appeal to formal worship. Confessional worship ways include spontaneous expression as personal faith testimony, verbal prayer request, prayer at an altar railing, or even an altar call, and thus demonstrate a quality of warm emotional familiarity. Furthermore, unison choruses, unaccompanied singing, and even kneeling for prayer create an unpretentious informal worship setting. Worship activities common to all traditional worship expressions include the Lord’s Prayer, scripture reading, sermon, invocation prayer, benediction, offering, and accompanied hymn singing,

“Worship Activities” seeks to discover the preferred medium by which Brethren elders communicate most effectively with God and one another. The responses of elders will reveal traditional worship activities, conventional or confessional, that create the means by which they most familiarly express relationship with God and one another. Subsequently, ministry leaders will gather helpful information regarding the importance of *intentional religious life*²⁷ in the experience of elder Brethren. Depending upon the experience of

²⁵ Bowman, *Portrait*, 60.

²⁶ See Appendix A, 111.

²⁷ Gentzler, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century*, 91.

respondents or discussion participants, this thesis-project may discover different conclusions than Bowman did, regarding the preferred traditional worship style.

Meaningful Intrinsic Worship

A study instrument, in the context of meaningful intrinsic worship, is best understood as a means to discern theological orientation rather than define theology. Carl Bowman suggests in order for one to understand the spectrum of theological orientation of the Brethren, it is best contextualized in the great commandments, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind.... Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37, 39).²⁸ While Brethren aim to balance personal relationship with the Lord God and neighbor, the balance often results in theological tension. One, whose primary theological orientation is on the relationship with God, gives spiritual attention to piety and purity of faith. Brethren of this confessional orientation seek to become more like Jesus. One, whose primary theological orientation is on the relationship with others, gives spiritual attention to deeds of service and transformation. Brethren of this conventional orientation seek to continue the work of Jesus.

Carl Bowman informs ministry leaders of operational faith and practice by exploring study participant views on twenty theological statements,²⁹ and the

²⁸ Bowman, *Portrait*, 41.

²⁹ Bowman, *Portrait*, 109.

degree of importance for sixteen faith-related commitments.³⁰ These outcomes offer direction in creating statements that Brethren elders find pertinent to operational faith and practice. While the theological statements and faith-related commitments used in Bowman's study are helpful, this thesis-project instrument seeks to explore elder preferences on commonly held Free Church worship values. Responses on the questionnaire endeavor to discern whether Ellis's values translate into preference or orientation toward conventional or confessional worship.

"Meaningful Worship," poses twenty-five statements asking respondents to express a degree of agreement, disagreement, or neutrality with each statement. Survey construction asks respondents to indicate the degree of agreement to the statements by checking: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. Statements are prepared with Christopher Ellis's Free Church values guiding and giving substance to conventional or confessional type corporate worship: *Scripture, Devotion, Community, and Kingdom*.³¹ First, Ellis suggests *Scripture* as an imperative value influencing the content of this tradition of worship. Ellis writes, "[The] written word provides a framework of external requirements which should have authoritative weight in the forming of Christian faith and practice."³²

With Scripture as the framework for faith and practice, survey participants express personal opinion in response to statements such as:

³⁰ Bowman, *Portrait*, 112.

³¹ Ellis, *Gathering*, 240-243.

³² Ellis, *Gathering*, 227.

“Meaningful worship experience must establish the authority of scripture; include a thorough understanding of scriptural truth; experience a biblical worldview; resolve ethical dilemmas by biblical principles; and empower Christians to live a biblical life.”³³ Barry Callen qualifies the perspective of the Believers tradition by holding scripture and life in careful balance: “[Radical Christianity] concurs with most of the classic beliefs of Christians, but with some cautions insisted on and certain emphases highlighted. A key emphasis is the need to *live* that which is believed. Doctrine is not to be separated from discipleship.”³⁴

Secondly, Ellis suggests *Devotion*, or one’s vertical relationship with God, as a worship value influencing the content of worship for Free Church worshipers. The relationship that connects believers to God offers occasion for encountering the God of scripture. Ellis shares four concerns that direct believers into this devotional relationship with God. Ellis writes:

There is the *theological* concern that worship be inspired by the Holy Spirit, as well as the *relational* concern that worship be understood as a personal encounter with God, the *affective* concern that worship should be “from the heart,” and the *ethical* concern that personal behaviour be congruent with this devotion.³⁵

With Devotion as a believer’s relationship with the living God, survey participants will express personal preference to statements such as:

“Meaningful worship experience must include a personal encounter with God, convict one of sinful behavior, produce a readiness to obey God, establish a

³³ See Appendix A, 112-113.

³⁴ Callen, *Radical Christianity*, 118.

³⁵ Ellis, *Gathering*, 227.

transparent relationship with God, and cause Christians to follow Jesus' way of life."³⁶ In relationship with God, the believer has a heart set singly upon God and God alone. Callen writes, "The Believers Church tradition has been formed around a vision calling for believers in Jesus Christ to be, first and foremost, committed to the realm and reign of God, not to the power arrangements and perverted values of this world."³⁷

Thirdly, Ellis suggests *Community* or the horizontal relationship with other believers, as a worship value influencing the content of worship for Free Church worshipers. The relationship that connects believers to each other gives the occasion for God's people to gather and express Devotion or the fruit of the Spirit with one another. Ellis characterizes the church "gathering" as the fellowship shared by Christians:

[Worship] is a gathering initiated by the hospitality of a God who calls and invites, and it is the fruit of the Spirit of unity who gathers people into life-changing community. But the centre of that community is Jesus Christ, through whom God reveals himself and to whom the Spirit bears testimony.³⁸

Community is experienced dynamically as Christians meet with other Christians. Survey participants will express personal opinion in response to statements such as: "Meaningful worship experience must lead to mutual accountability with Christians, include an eagerness to seek God's will, include the exercise of spiritual gifts, inspire justice by non-violent means, and

³⁶ See Appendix A, 112-113.

³⁷ Callen, *Radical Christianity*, 118.

³⁸ Ellis, *Gathering*, 243.

strengthen unity in the congregation.”³⁹ Callen writes,

The Believers Church tradition, consequently, has been based on the concept of a “gathered” as opposed to a “given” church. Being *gathered* intends to be dynamic and voluntary, while being *given* speaks of the church as established and settled in its accumulated order, formalized wisdom, and standardized sacramental practices. Being *gathered* highlights the responsiveness of faith in relation to the ongoing work of God’s gracious Spirit; being *given* easily degenerates into merely the inevitability of institutional legitimacy and dominance.⁴⁰

Finally, Ellis suggests *Kingdom* or a people united for a purpose yet to be fulfilled, as a worship value influencing the content of worship for Free Church worshipers. While Scripture establishes Christian faith and practice in the present age, Kingdom content empowers Christian faith and practice for the age to come. Christians discover the relevance of faith and practice through Devotion and Community engaged in mission with God and one another. Ellis writes, “[Mission and worship] embody and serve the coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and it is in his invitation, and the gathering work of the Spirit, that the missiological relevance of worship will be understood and the rich spirituality of mission experienced.”⁴¹

With Kingdom as the point of engagement in active covenant community, survey participants will express personal opinion in response to statements such as: “Meaningful worship experience must include a determination to spread the saving gospel, include a determination to practice the serving gospel, lead to reconciling enemies with one another, advocate stewardship of God’s creation,

³⁹ See Appendix A, 112-113.

⁴⁰ Callen, *Radical Christianity*, 121.

⁴¹ Ellis, *Gathering*, 244.

and be a celebration of God's reign. "...the Sunday worship of Christians should be an eschatological interlude, a resting in God, a celebration of Christ's resurrection, an in-streaming of the power of God's reign yet to come in its fullness, but already present to make God-like life possible."⁴²

The study instrument section titled, "Meaningful Worship," seeks to characterize intrinsic influences on Brethren elders to experience meaningful worship toward either conventional or confessional styles. The responses of elders will contextualize worship preference framed by theological orientation. Additionally, ministry leaders will gather helpful information regarding operational faith and practice from elder Brethren.

Summary

In an interview with Amy Hanson, author of recently published *Baby Boomers and Beyond*⁴³ Ronald E. Keener, inquires as to where older adults fit into the program of today's churches.⁴⁴ She responds,

It is crucial for church leaders to see older adults as essential to the mission of the church and involve them 100 percent in that mission. Older adults need to be recognized as having time, experience and resources to be invested in significant Kingdom work. These adults need to be called to something greater than themselves and viewed as vital and essential to the mission.⁴⁵

Authors such as Hanson are beginning to recognize the importance of ministry leaders equipping for a 21st-century phenomena in the explosive generation

⁴² Callen, *Radical Christianity*, 127-128.

⁴³ Amy Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over 50* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

⁴⁴ Ronald E. Keener, "The 'new old' bring much to the church, but often aren't noticed," *Church Executive* 9, no. 9 (September 2010).

⁴⁵ Keener, *New Old*, 19.

known as “Baby Boomers.” Americans born between 1946 and 1964 comprise a majority of those reaching the age of 50-something or what Hanson would refer to as the “new old”. Unlike generations before them, Hanson contends, “Just as when they were young, they are interested in changing the world.”⁴⁶

With ever-increasing numbers of older adults in local congregations come potential ministry opportunities for ministry leaders and the congregations. It is the proposition of this thesis-project that developing dynamic worship, in the Free Church worship tradition, holds great opportunity for 21st -century ministry leaders to purposefully engage in ministry to a community ‘planted in the house of the Lord.’ Consequently, a study like this may lead to re-integrating or blending worship, and thus fulfill the relationship that one experiences in becoming like Jesus and belonging to a larger community of believers.

⁴⁶ Keener, *New Old*, 18.

V. OUTCOMES

Brethren elders who live in covenant community thrive on active mutual enrichment experienced in corporate worship. The thesis-project survey responses, though limited in number, of LVBH elder Brethren portray the frequency of involvement in various worship activities aimed at mutual enrichment. Subsequently, ministry leaders may gather practical guidance regarding congregational interdependence articulated by elder Brethren. Next, the survey endeavored to discover the preferred traditional worship activities by which elder Brethren communicate most effectively with God and one another. Subsequently, ministry leaders may gather useful data regarding preferred traditional worship activities, which express meaningful intentional religious life in the experience of elder Brethren. The responses of elders will contextualize worship preference framed by theological orientation. Finally, ministry leaders will gather helpful material regarding operational faith and practice from elder Brethren.

Based upon the project design, this study was conducted in two parts: questionnaire survey, followed by focus group discussion. This chapter describes the results of the study: the limitation of the quantifying or survey data, and the richness of the qualifying or focus group data. While the outcomes may seem ambiguous to some readers, to Brethren the results qualify the setting of gathering for worship. Not surprisingly, survey data portrays elder Brethren at a crucial crossroad in life, offering a spiritual legacy, which challenges Brethren ministry leaders to discover the importance of congregational life.

While this study perspective may have credibility for a year, five years, or even a decade, evidence will reflect that elder Brethren cherish rich communication with God and God's people found in corporate worship.

Survey Sessions

Questionnaire surveys were conducted on two separate occasions, one week apart. The first session involved 11 participants, while the second session involved nine participants. The low number of participants may have been due to several factors including limited publicity, weather threats, and community schedule conflicts. Initially, a campus newsletter article alerted potential participants to an upcoming survey announcement. The purpose of this was to spark interest and inquiries by potential participants. No inquiries were made, and that may have been an early indication of the effect of the announcement.

The first survey session was publicized five days before being conducted. While publicity avenues of bulletin boards and a campus cable announcement were established, visibility of the notices may have been limited. Granted, the campus cable channel is widely available, yet some residents do not regularly follow it. Bulletin boards were limited in effect, because they are confined within the walls of the Community Center and connecting apartment buildings. A number of potential participants reside in duplexes and cottages not physically connected to the main building. Even though potential participants living in duplexes and cottages frequent the Community Center, bulletin board postings and campus cable announcements about campus events frequently go unnoticed.

One week following the first session, a second survey was publicized due to earlier low participation. While similar avenues of publicity were pursued, the Researcher asked the LVBH President to announce the next survey session in a “town hall” setting with LVBH campus elders. Following the ‘town hall’ meeting, the Researcher received several inquiries about participation in another survey session. In the time leading to the second session, winter weather and a scheduled LVBH campus elder lunch trip threatened low participation. Possibly contributing also to the scheduling problem may have been that each survey session was set on the same weekday. Participation may have been stronger if the two sessions had been scheduled on different days.

Survey Results

Respondent input was imperative to the results of the survey. The following summations aim to report the results of the survey.

Table 5.1
Percentage of Brethren elders who answer each item as “Weekly” for
Worship Participation Frequency.
[Percentages based and ranked upon total responses for each item.]

Worship Participation	Weekly Percentage
I attend corporate worship	94
I participate in congregational singing.	90
I participate in corporate worship.	86
I worship with other Protestant Christians.	70
I participate in worship leadership.	23

“Worship Participation” portrays how frequently respondents participate in corporate worship. Brethren elders live in covenant community through active mutual enrichment. Statement responses show that 94 percent of participants surveyed attend worship on a weekly basis. On a weekly basis, 86 percent of respondents surveyed participate in worship. Respondents participate in worship each week through congregational singing (90 percent) and worship leadership (23 percent). Each week, 70 percent of respondents worship with other Protestant Christians. This last percentage may reflect respondent perception of worship with other Protestant Christians as the weekly worship held in the Chapel of LVBH. While Brethren do not exclusively lead weekly worship, Protestants other than Brethren attend each service.

The responses regarding participation in Love Feast or bread and cup communion were mixed,¹ since a few respondents marked weekly participation in each. While bread and cup communion is possible on a weekly basis, it is not probable for Church of the Brethren congregations. In addition, while Love Feast is possible on a weekly basis, general practice among Church of the Brethren congregations is either once or twice annually. Sufficient results do demonstrate respondents participate in Love Feast (74 percent) or bread and cup communion (78 percent) once or twice annually.

Results may be generally qualified by suggesting respondents who chose

¹ Results of each statement on bread and cup communion, and Love Feast showed that four participants responded to participating in each of these on a weekly basis while other participants gave answers consistent with the practice frequency of each in Church of the Brethren settings.

to participate in the survey were primarily weekly worship attenders. Implied in this suggestion is that occasional and non-attenders would not have chosen to participate in the survey. For the sake of the survey, worship frequency represents one's participation, with a degree of credibility, in the worship activities listed in the rest of the questionnaire. Therefore, it is important to establish this qualification, to a degree of reliability, in order for respondents to participate in the next two sections.

"Worship Activities" portrays which activities respondents value most highly in traditional worship. Respondents were given a list of 21 worship activities found in formal, informal, and common traditional worship. According to Table 5.2, the most highly valued worship activity by survey respondents was hymns at 94 percent. The subsequent ranking of worship activities highly valued by respondents included accompanied singing (89 percent), scripture reading (81 percent), and sermon (76 percent). The secondary tier of responses picture respondents strongly preferring formal worship activities. A tertiary response tier portrays fewer respondents favoring informal worship activities. In the final response tier, lower percentages reflect favorable responses to remaining activities, formal and informal mixed, by fewer respondents. The final tier of responses, as reflected in the results was strongly neutral responses. One respondent suggests elder Brethren would offer a low rank in the position for prayer, due to mobility concerns.

Table 5.2
Percentage of Brethren elders who answer
each item as “Highly Value” among
Worship Activities.
[Percentages based and ranked upon total responses for each item.]

Worship Activity	Highly Value Percentage
Hymns	94
Accompanied singing	89
Scripture reading	81
Sermon	76
Choir anthems	72
Call to worship	67
Benediction	47
Lord’s prayer	47
Unaccompanied singing	44
Unison prayer	39
Sharing prayer requests	36
Personal faith testimony	33
Choruses	29
Offering	29
Silent prayer	28
Invocation prayer	24
Altar call	23
Responsive readings	22
Prayer at altar railing	12
Standing for prayer	12
Kneeling for prayer	5

The results of this section, limited by a low number of responses, would favor the observation of Carl D. Bowman that elder Brethren prefer traditional

conventional worship to traditional confessional worship.² While difficult to discern at this point, influences may spring from the number of elder Brethren who did not grow up in Brethren churches, from non-Brethren who married Brethren spouses, or from elder Brethren involved in worship with other Protestants. At the same time, this may reflect the growing sense of Brethren striving toward mainstream traditional worship.

“Meaningful Worship” seeks to discern respondents who strongest agreed upon opinions reflected in traditional worship orientation. Respondents received a list of 20 statements about meaningful worship. Responses to these statements reflect agreement on intrinsic faith and practice experiences according to survey participant opinion. Responses on the questionnaire endeavored to discern whether Ellis’ values--Scripture, Devotion, Community, and Kingdom³--translate into preference or orientation toward conventional or confessional worship. In so doing, preferences would reflect either conventional or confessional orientation to traditional worship.

It is interesting to note the number of result percentage couplets, which in a few cases, reflect mutual almost dialogical conventional and confessional orientation to worship. An example that best illustrates this dialogue is in the responses to “Serving Gospel” and “Conviction of sinful behavior.” Each statement represents opposite ends of the conventional and confessional spectrum, yet each received an equal percentage of response [38].

² Carl Desportes Bowman, *Portrait of A People: The Church of the Brethren at 300* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 2008), 59.

³ Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press. 2004), 240-243.

Table 5.3
Percentage of Brethren elders who answer
each item as “Strongly Agree” among
Meaningful Worship Orientation.
 [Percentages based and ranked upon total responses for each item.]

Meaningful Worship	Strongly Agree Percentage
Seek God’s will	55
Celebrate God’s Reign	55
Follow Jesus’ way	52
Authority of scripture	50
Stewardship of God’s creation	44
Live a biblical life	44
Unity in the congregation	41
Obey God	38
Serving Gospel	38
Convict of sinful behavior	38
Justice by non-violent means	38
Transparent relationship with God	35
Saving Gospel	33
Scriptural truth	33
Reconcile enemies	29
Resolve ethical dilemmas	29
Encounter God	27
Biblical worldview	27
Mutual accountability	22
Spiritual gifts	22

Confessional worship orientation is experienced when participants primarily anticipate strengthening one’s relationship with God through piety and purity. The strongest preferred traditional worship orientation, 55 percent of survey respondents, involved seeking God’s will and celebrating God’s reign.

Each statement considers the primary place of one's self in relation to God. Depending upon the perspective of a respondent, this statement may have meant seeking God's will for one's personal life, or seeking God's will for life with other Christians. Parenthetically, celebrating God's reign may have meant to celebrate either as a person of God or as the people of God.

Conventional worship orientation is experienced when participants primarily anticipate strengthening relationships with other Christians through service or community transformation. The next greatest percentage of strong agreement was in response to the statement, "follow Jesus' way" at 52 percent. The statement connects to the Church of the Brethren's official byline "*Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.*" that is associated with conventional orientation.

In addition to marking the questionnaire, respondents were given space to write personal responses. Comments were instructive for ministry leaders regarding sermon length and content, as well as worship content. Two writers suggested sermon length should be 15 and 20 minutes, respectively. One suggestion for ministry leaders encouraged sermon series on Revelation. Another writer suggested value in sharing personal illustrations--without embarrassing family--and stories of people who have overcome pain and struggle. Regarding interaction with others in the sanctuary, one respondent valued greeting others as worship begins, while several others advised of several distractions (i.e. casual attire, crying babies, eating and drinking in the sanctuary, and wandering in and out of the sanctuary) that disrupt worship.

Respondents took exception to the study instrument using the word “must” in the “Meaningful Worship” statements. The respondent writes, “Worship may do all these things [referring to the statements], but to say it cannot be worship unless it does is to ignore the many varieties of worship experience.” While such comments were instructive for theology, “may” statements would have proven too ambiguous for discerning theological orientation, which was the goal of this questionnaire section.

Discussion Sessions

Through focus groups, the Researcher has the opportunity to ask participants to explain the results, rather than simply describe one individual’s perspective. At each of the survey sessions, participants were offered the opportunity to join in a discussion, or focus group session. The nature of this focus group would be to discuss the results of the survey and have elder Brethren qualify how the results are viewed and understood. Discussion participants signed up for focus group participation at the survey session. After the first survey group signed up and the follow up survey was scheduled, it was realized that time was limited to prepare results and conduct the discussion. Therefore, the Researcher scheduled two focus group sessions on separate days, with two different Recorders, to assist in keeping accurate notes for the sessions. Then, all who signed up for the focus group were contacted by telephone, and with one exception, were rescheduled for one of two 90-minute sessions.

The first focus group included five and the second focus group included

seven participants. Each session began with an explanation of the confidential nature of this setting, and the need to secure each one's consent for inclusion in the session. Focus group discussion began only after informed consent forms were completed, confidential participation advised, and survey results were explained. Participants were advised that willingness to continue with or participate in the session was at their discretion, and each may pass on offering an answer to a statement. Each willing participant was offered uninterrupted opportunity to respond to reflection statements: "Reflect on what worship attendance means, reflect on what worship participation means, reflect on what valuing (or preference in) worship means, and name what is most meaningful in corporate worship."⁴ The focus group concluded with individuals reflecting on the question, "What would you want ministry leaders to know about meaningful worship?"⁵

Discussion Results

Resultant discussion from the first focus group aimed at explaining the character and importance of traditional worship. The group agreed that traditional worship must contain a degree of formality, yet it is also necessary for informality in a service. One respondent suggested that it was important to have "a structured, informal service." It was important to this respondent, and agreed by focus group members, that to one degree all things must be in order, but not to the detriment of allowing the Spirit of God to move. Allowing freedom

⁴ See Appendix B, 114.

⁵ See Appendix B, 114.

of the Holy Spirit to move among the congregation is imperative to corporate worship, according to this focus group. Parenthetically, one respondent suggested that while Episcopal liturgy is beautiful, it does not lend to the freedom of God speaking to the heart of ministry leaders. As for the sermon, it must always be relevant, pointed, and offered in love. One participant suggested a congregational discussion take place following the sermon in the spirit of the early Brethren. One respondent suggested ministry leaders in his congregation “do a really good job accommodating many types of worship in a dignified fashion.”

Another theme discussed by the first focus group was what attendance and participation in worship means. Each of the respondents had their own way of articulating the importance of weekly worship: “it’s vital,” “necessary to get through the week,” “being present with others is important,” and “[Attendance is] what it means to be part of the family of God.” Recognizing God and being part of God’s church is important for one who says it is heart-warming to see all God’s people gather in for mid-week Chapel worship--elders on wheelchairs or with walkers, and dementia elders accompanied by caregivers. For this respondent, this is a picture of what it means to be God’s people.

The only other theme briefly discussed with the first focus group was the idea of participation in worship leadership in the context of congregational worship. It is important to one respondent to have others be part of the service, especially youth and young adults, but there may be times when elders also “want to be asked to help.” The respondent suggested that while many elders

may not jump at the opportunity, it is important to ask for those who may be both willing and able to lead. One respondent added that elders might be willing to read scripture or offer the Morning Prayer.

Resultant discussion from the second focus group aimed at describing the importance of worship leader planning and preparedness. The second group centered discussion upon the importance of ministry leader intentionally blending worship. Two issues that were important to participation in worship were gathering and singing. According to this focus group, these two are interconnected. As with the first group, one respondent said, “it’s just not Sunday” without meeting together. As in the first focus group, one respondent felt the mid-week worship at LVBH was a wonderful picture of God’s people gathering regardless of physical weakness. Another respondent added that without worship attendance “life seems empty.” Fellowship and long-time friendships are strengthened by weekly congregational gatherings. Congregational singing, as perceived by respondents, is a means by which the congregation unites its voice and its heart in preparation for worship. However, respondents advised that the music be familiar and not too long. Both length and unfamiliarity were perceived as a hindrance to meaningful gathering.

Two issues that were perceived as important and problematic were the blend of musical sections and the too casual pulpit manner of some worship leaders. One respondent suggested that at least one familiar song or hymn should be included in each worship service. The frustration was not with contemporary type songs, but with unfamiliar hymns. Another respondent

suggested that including unfamiliar music seems to hinder connecting with other worshipers. The perception, by the respondent, is that worship is as important to share as it is to experience.

Casual pulpit manner, by either ministry or laity, is distracting to the worship experience. While the attire and behavior of some worshipers and their children are distracting, it was the sense of one respondent that there is a higher expectation for those who lead worship. Two respondents added that worship leaders should be prepared to read scripture. By this respondents meant that it was important to them that diction and familiarity with the text be a priority for readers, either ministry or laity. It was felt that commitment to and instruction by ministry leaders was a primary course of corrective action.

Practical Outcomes

Since the aim of the study instrument is to inform ministry leaders regarding issues relative to meaningful worship with elder Brethren, the above quantifying and qualifying data leads to some practical direction. Data, from both survey and focus group discussion, shows elder LVBH Brethren attend and participate on a weekly basis. From focus group discussions, it is generally agreed that congregational singing is an important component of participation, and qualifies connectedness to both God and other worshipers by elder Brethren. When developing meaningful worship with elder Brethren, ministry leaders should not ignore the impact that music has on strengthening congregational interdependence, according to elder LVBH Brethren.

Elder LVBH Brethren encourage ministry leaders to be thoughtful in planning worship activities, but relational in leading worship. Elder Brethren appreciate predictability in worship, as with an order of worship, but advise ministry leaders not to inhibit the movement of the Spirit of God. Ministry leaders are encouraged to consider ways the Spirit of God “fine tunes” communication, with God and one another, during worship on any given Sunday. It is important to elder Brethren that ministry leaders are conversational from the pulpit whether through prayers or sermons. Written prayers or sermons should express thoughtful content, in a conversational manner, according to elder Brethren. Regardless of whether one is directing music, reading scripture, leading in prayer, or preaching the sermon, elders expect that worship leaders thoughtfully prepare. Elder LVBH Brethren want ministry leaders to know that, for those who lead worship, preparedness is imperative.

Considerations relative to operational faith and practice, worship--contained in the spiritual needs “to become like Jesus” and “to belong to God’s people”--is important when carefully balancing scriptural values guiding worship, in light of relationships. Elder LVBH Brethren took exception to predicting how individual worshipers will experience these values. Inconclusive results of this survey section portray a people who strive to consider the significance worship has on our relationship with God and one another. However, focus group insights have enriched what is important for ministry leaders to understand about the expectations of elder Brethren regarding meaningful worship for the entire congregation.

Ministry leaders, who take to heart the results of this study, will discover treasures that will enrich congregational life. A rich trove of experience and insight from elders, in a focus group setting, would enlighten ministry leaders to keep worship fresh and alive. Through prayerful consideration and thoughtful discussion, ministry leaders along with elders, can discern what nourishes and strengthens the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of the community of which they are part.

VI. SUMMARY

This present study has sought to discover how ministry leaders create meaningful worship with elder Brethren. It has been enlightening to discover what influences one's desire to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind, and all your strength.... [And to] love neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30, 31). In the pursuit of this dynamic of meaningful worship, it is important for ministry leaders to engage elders in experiences, which enrich encounters "in becoming like Jesus," and "belonging to God's people." Meaningful encounters, like these, enable elders to maintain and even grow in Christian faith, in accordance with Erickson's growth measures of fellowship, obedience, and love.¹

Ministry leaders, who pursue excellence in whole congregational life, will purposefully create worship that integrates Gentzler's principles of congregational interdependence, intentional religious practice, and operational faith and practice, or life.² As a result, ministry leaders will build relevant faith communities engaged in the motion and tension of dynamic extrinsic and intrinsic worship. In an age when communities experience change, only those who create proactive initiatives will discover keys to remain vibrant and relevant. Two initiatives, which may influence the outcomes of any future study similar to the present study, hinge on unanticipated spiritual resurgence, and

¹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 514-515.

² Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century: An Inquiry Approach* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2008), 92.

generational integration.

Spiritual Resurgence

Given the ebb and flow of religious experience, a study like this may prove unanticipated results in an event of spiritual resurgence. American Protestantism has experienced movements of spiritual vitality, which influence many Christians, including Brethren. Such movements enhance the worship experience by invigorating faith and animating practice [confessional], or by enlightening faith and compelling practice [conventional]. The rush of such movements swells both the faith and practice of others searching for similar meaningful experiences. These movements influence meaningful worship and contribute to the language of Christian worship. One issue for consideration is how Protestant spiritual renewal, past or future, will influence worship in the Church of the Brethren.

Brethren anguish over a spiritual identity ever in progress, especially evident in the setting of congregational worship. Don Fitzkee observes a shift in 20th-century worship activities affected by three major factors, "An evolving self-understanding, a [seminary] trained ministry, and ecumenical cooperation all played a part in the transition from peculiar [historic Brethren] to Protestant [mainstream] worship."³ Some may suggest that, of these factors, ecumenical cooperation of Brethren has influenced corporate worship most. During the past four decades, spiritual renewal movements have either invigorated or exasperated denominational ministry leaders. In the short-term, congregational

³ Donald R. Fitzkee, *Moving Toward The Mainstream* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1995), 290.

ministry leaders have experienced a great resurgence of spirituality in the congregation. In the long-term, congregational ministry leaders have experienced transitory spiritual fervor. Conversely, elder Christians may offer to ministry leaders lifelong input on the favorable and adverse influences emerging from such renewal movements.

Kenneth Morse reflects on renewal in worship among the Brethren and instructs ministry leaders to take the opportunity to consider the positive outcomes. Morse advises careful consideration by ministry leaders as to whether such renewal efforts, including the Charismatic, Liturgical Renewal, and Ecumenical Movements,⁴ are genuine revitalization or mere novelty. Morse advises, "...[W]e ought to examine carefully and openly some of the movements that promise renewal in worship. No single development may meet our expectations, but we can appropriate the values that commend themselves to our congregational needs."⁵ The aforementioned renewal movements, influencing the Church of the Brethren, characterize three different styles of worship. The Charismatic Movement tends to be enthusiastic, informal worship. The Liturgical Movement tends to be a contemplative, formal worship. The Ecumenical Movement tends toward a reflective and informal worship.

Evidence of the influence of each movement is found in the hymns, songs, and readings included in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*.⁶ Interestingly, Kenneth Morse has contributed hymns and songs to this hymnal reflecting the spiritual

⁴ Kenneth I. Morse, *Move In Our Midst* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1977), 129-132.

⁵ Morse, *Move In Our Midst*, 129.

⁶ *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1992). Church of the Brethren congregations use this as the standard hymnal.

influence of various perspectives, ranging from traditional hymns of piety to songs of social justice and contemplative life. Morse encourages Brethren worshipers to reflect on how introducing new worship ways may refresh and renew traditional patterns of worship:

If singing a new song to the Lord, if translating the gospel message into today's language, if stepping up the tempo of celebration can renew a sense of spiritual dynamic in the congregation, then by all means let us welcome the contribution of new worship patterns. In doing so we need not reject what continues to be of meaning and worth in older traditions. Indeed we may rediscover some the treasures of the past, finding that they speak to our present needs.⁷

Ministry leaders must aim at giving elders a voice with which to worship, rather than finding a voice by which to minister to the people. In the context of Gentzler's operational faith and practice,⁸ Brethren ministry leaders should use renewal movements as opportunities to integrate rather than segregate community.

Generational Integration

The second issue for consideration pivots on the generational or intergenerational effect congregations will experience in the next five or ten years. Intergenerational issues have become a point of conversation for those who study senior adults as well as youth and young adults. While Richard Gentzler and Kara Powell offer experience and wisdom of the church at each end of life, both speak the language of interdependence and integration bridging the

⁷ Morse, *Move in Our Midst*, 129.

⁸ Gentzler, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century*, 92.

generation gap. Their ideals, along with Amy Hanson's instruction,⁹ will challenge ministry leaders, who prepare contemporary and traditional services, to go the distance in developing worship for a variety of generations.

Richard Gentzler suggests aging Baby Boomers, like their elders, seek meaning and purpose in the later years but express it differently. While some Boomers appear to thrive in religious life, others do not. Regarding meaning and purpose in religious life, Gentzler qualifies their faith foundation: "For many Boomers, religious authority lies in the individual believer--rather than in the church or the Bible."¹⁰ Gentzler advises ministry leaders to reflect on integrating worship that is relevant to Boomers who base Christian faith in extremely personal and vigorous ways. The Boomer generation, who choose to remain active in congregational life, may certainly bring a fresh flavor to the type of worship that is meaningful for Protestants, even Brethren.

Kara Powell, a former youth pastor and professor of youth ministry, is conducting a study to consider age-reintegration to the life of the congregation.¹¹ Powell is presently conducting a three-year study on the effects of youth who are active in age-integrated and -segregated congregations; early results are offering surprising discoveries. Powell says, "Teens should not only be the objects of ministry; they need to be the subjects of ministry as well. It's the 16-year-old that has relationships with 66-year-olds and 6-year-olds who is more likely to

⁹ Amy Hanson, *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over 50* (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2010).

¹⁰ Gentzler, *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century*, 117.

¹¹ Marshall Shelley and Brandon O'Brien, "Is the Era of Age Segregation Over?" *Leadership Journal* 30, no. 3 (Summer 2009), 43-47.

stay involved in a faith community after she graduates [from high school]."¹²

Such ideals begin to tug at the fabric of specialized ministries; especially worship leadership, that have been emerging since the mid-20th century.

Ministry leaders will discover that engaging in conversation with elders must not be perceived as a grueling dialogue. As suggested earlier, such conversations can be invigorating and inspiring. The important part of such a conversation is listening. Listening does not mean to replicate past experiences of elders, but means taking to heart how meaningful worship has transformed their lives. When ministry leaders consider worship as edifying for the spirit and the community, then the careful balance of dynamic faith is invigorated for generations to come.

¹² Shelley, *Era of Age Segregation*, 45.

APPENDIX A

Worship Development Questionnaire

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING:

This questionnaire is designed to ask Church of the Brethren senior adults for input related to meaningful corporate worship. Your responses will help ministry leaders to evaluate and create worship with senior adult Christians.

This threefold questionnaire seeks to explore your opinions regarding worship participation, worship related activities, and valuable experiences in worship. In addition, you will be offered an opportunity to comment on anything you want ministry leaders to know about each of the topics.

Please be assured that your answers will be kept strictly confidential. The information you provide will appear only in summary form, in combination with responses of other study participants to maintain anonymity. Please do not place your name on any materials. By agreeing to participate in this study, you have given your voluntary consent to be part of the project.

This project is being conducted by Norman D. Yeater, Doctoral Candidate at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in partial fulfillment of completing a doctoral program.

Return the completed questionnaire to the box on the monitor's table.

Worship Participation					
Please indicate the frequency with which you attend or participate in the following items.	Weekly	Monthly	Twice Annually	Annually	Never
I attend corporate worship.					
I participate in corporate worship.					
I participate in worship leadership.					
I participate in bread and cup communion.					
I participate in Love Feast.					
I worship with other Protestant Christians.					
I participate in congregational singing.					

Worship Activities					
Please indicate the degree to which you value the following items as a worship activity.	Highly value	Value	Neutral	Little value	No value
Accompanied singing					
Choir anthems					
Hymns					
Choruses					
Unaccompanied singing					
Scripture reading					
Call to worship					
Benediction					
Personal faith testimony					
Unison prayer					
Sermon					
Silent prayer					
Invocation prayer					
Kneeling for prayer					
Responsive readings					
Sharing prayer requests					
Altar call					
Lord's prayer					
Offering					
Prayer at altar railing					
Standing for prayer					

Is there anything else you want ministry leaders to know about worship activities?

Meaningful Worship					
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Meaningful worship experience must establish the authority of scripture.					
Meaningful worship experience must include a personal encounter with God.					
Meaningful worship experience must lead to mutual accountability with Christians.					
Meaningful worship experience must include a determination to spread the saving gospel.					
Meaningful worship experience must include a thorough understanding of scriptural truth.					
Meaningful worship experience must convict one of sinful behavior.					
Meaningful worship experience must include an eagerness to seek God's will.					
Meaningful worship experience must include a determination to practice the serving gospel.					
Meaningful worship experience must create a biblical worldview.					
Meaningful worship experience must produce a readiness to obey God.					

Is there anything else you want ministry leaders to know about meaningful worship?

Meaningful Worship					
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Meaningful worship experience must include the exercise of spiritual gifts.					
Meaningful worship experience must lead to reconciling enemies with one another.					
Meaningful worship experience must resolve ethical dilemmas by biblical principles.					
Meaningful worship experience must establish a transparent relationship with God.					
Meaningful worship experience must inspire justice by non-violent means.					
Meaningful worship experience must advocate stewardship of God's creation.					
Meaningful worship experience must empower Christians to live a biblical life.					
Meaningful worship experience must cause Christians to follow Jesus' way of life.					
Meaningful worship experience must strengthen unity in the congregation.					
Meaningful worship experience must be a celebration of God's reign.					

Is there anything else you want ministry leaders to know about meaningful worship?

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Reflections on Questionnaire Results

The purpose of this discussion is to share with you the results of the worship development questionnaire, seek your response to the results, and to qualify what the results reflect for ministry leaders in the development of dynamic worship. Dynamic worship includes both the outward expression or activities of worship, and the inward experience or the meaningful results of worship. As you may recall, the questionnaire explored three areas: personal opinion about participating in corporate worship in general, opinion on what worship activities are meaningful, and opinion regarding what results from meaningful worship.

A standard of confidentiality is imperative to this setting of the study. As a participant, you are asked to review and sign the consent form. The signed consent will authenticate your willingness to participate, and intention to have your response confidentially included in the study in summary form. The discussion or focus group is a setting where confidentiality is of utmost importance to those who attend and participate. You are asked to honor this trust to retain mutual integrity.

Each person will be given an opportunity to respond to each of the following, without interruption. During your response time, the Recorder will log your response, read your response back to you, and you are at liberty to change, correct or withdraw your response from the record.

1. Reflect on what worship attendance means.
2. Reflect on what worship participation means.
3. Reflect on what valuing worship means.
4. Name what is most meaningful in corporate worship.
5. What would you want ministry leaders to know about meaningful worship?

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VITA

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